# THOMAS THE LAMBKIN

CLAUDE FARRÈRE

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# THOMAS THE LAMBKIN

## GENTLEMAN OF FORTUNE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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CLAUDE FARRÈRE

# Thomas the Lambkin Gentleman of Fortune

Authorized translation from the French

BY

LEO ONGLEY

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# THOMAS THE LAMBKIN

## GENTLEMAN OF FORTUNE

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## BOOK I

### The Eagle's Nest

# Thomas The Lambkin

## CHAPTER I

THE noonday angelus; and then a cannon-shot far out to sea!

From the tower of Notre Dame the watch signalled the news. "West, northwest, a Corsair frigate coming into the roads!"

Nothing unusual about this certainly at St. Malo! Nevertheless, it was ever a brave sight to watch one of these fine Malouin frigates coming up from the horizon, scudding home victorious from the great war. And the news had scarcely flown down the streets of the ancient town when in a twinkling all the idle folk were thronging outside the ramparts, crowding the Vieux Quai whence the frigate sighted from the watch-tower could best be seen as soon as she rounded Fort Gewgaw and the Spur.

All kinds of folks too were there: riff-raff of course, plenty of it, as always when there's something to look at with arms folded and mouth agape, and no trouble or risk to run; sailors a-plenty too, glad to leave off pulling at their tobacco quids and wine bottles for a moment to watch with a knowing eye how their fellow-sailors, who were their fellow-countrymen and comrades as well, worked their ship. Not least in size or number were the

burghers, armourers, victuallers, chandlers, or merely honest citizens of the proud old city, which from its earliest days has ever boldly adventured on the sea—not without great profit, and still greater glory; and finally, running ahead of the rest, slipping through the crowd until they had reached the very front of it and were even splashing their wooden shoes or bare feet in the water, the women and children, white-cheeked, eyes straining for a sight of the homecomer, lips and eyebrows twitching under the cruel suspense—the mothers and wives, in short, the sisters, promised brides, and little ones, of the lads gone away to sea, and so slow, ever, to return.

The frigate meanwhile, running under her topsails with the wind on her quarter, sailed close in under the Pierre de Rance, then chocked her sheets, ready, wind abeam, to take the passage between Point Naye and l'Eperon, before a fitful blow, warm and sullen, from the southwest. Fifteen minutes. . . . Nothing in sight yet, from the quay. Suddenly, a cry, eager, impatient, from the small fry and their mothers. The Corsair's mainyard was pointing outward from the cape, like a long culverin come to join the cannon whose bronze muzzles bristled from the flank of the granite bastions. A moment later, a white sail appeared, drawing away little by little from the high red wall of the fort. And at last the frigate, all of her, in full view!

In the group of dignitaries a burgher turned to one of his companions, who was somewhat less attentive than the rest,—a fat armourer in plain grey coat, with a round red face under a round wig—and familiarly slapped him on the shoulder.

"Hey there, Julien Gravé, my boy, have a look at what's coming in, for, God forgive me, it's your very own. Yes sir, hang me by my heels for a bat if that boat out there isn't your *Grande Tiphaine* . . . the very same!"

Julien Gravé, his indifference forgotten, leaned for-

ward, wrinkling his forehead, puckering up his eyes, small enough though they were already.

"Bah!" said he after a moment's scrutiny, "what are you talking about, Monsieur Danycan? My *Grande Tiphaine* carries twenty foot more of mast than this frigate, whose builders seem to have been stingy enough with their wood!"

But the Chevalier Danycan, a fine robust man of haughty mien—with a right courtly air—his sword-point cocked up the flaps of his coat, that was fashioned of fine cloth and heavy with braid and frogs—merely smiled by way of answer. . . . Then, with a brisk slash of his hand through the air, as he spoke:

"Julien Gravé, my friend," said he, "use your eyes! Ruyter's cannon have raked that woodwork, take my word for it!"

The year of grace, 1673, had not yet begun, and the formidable Dutch fleets were still without serious interference, roving about the North Sea, the Channel, the Atlantic, and even the Mediterranean. True, since the King had for the last four or five months been winning battle after battle in the Low Countries and in Flanders and even beyond the Rhine, the United Provinces, conquered, devastated, inundated, had been reduced to a mere shadow on land. But on the sea it was another story. And Monseigneur Colbert, who—so it was reported—was working night and day to provide his royal master with a navy, had not as yet succeeded any too well. Thus the Corsair trade was more than ever a dangerous business. And often enough it cost more to go and bravely pillage an enemy ship on the high seas than peaceably to buy the same merchandise in the market place!

Suddenly uneasy, Julien Gravé, the armourer, was examining the frigate supposedly his, as she rounded the Ravelin bastion. The watchers could not as yet tell whether she was going to ground at the very foot of

the ramparts on the beach of Mer Bonne, or farther from the town, in the middle of the bay, on the Bar Tousiaux.

"Mercy on me!"—Julien Gravé suddenly found an oath—"You have falcon's eyes, Danycan! . . . That *is* my ship! . . . But in what a state, Heaven help me!"

An outcry from the crowd now, like an echo of the armourer's exclamations. The *Grande Tiphaine* was driving on Mer Bonne. Barely two hundred yards from the Vieux Quai, as she prudently kept to larboard, so as to ground safely on the pebbles of the beach under the north tower of the city gate, her port quarter came into view, near enough for the crowd to see it in minutest detail. Good cause, then, for exclamations! The whole flank, from railing to water-line, was smashed in, splintered, torn open in twenty places—a lattice work, a sieve in short! And the waves, as though at a game, plumped into the gaping holes, and splashed down—so at least it looked—into the very bottom of the hold. Damaging for the cargo and perilous for the ship, in good sooth!

"Mercy on us!" the armourer was muttering in endless litany, his fists clenched, and cheeks blanched. "Mercy on us! That was a new hull and of the best oak to be found! . . . A plague smother those Dutch rats! . . . Look at that figurehead, in tatters, and those masts, everyone on crutches! Look at that poop crumpled into a cocked hat, and that mizzen, as full of holes as a skimming ladle!"

There was no denying that the frigate had come through rough treatment; it was even doubtful whether any shipbuilder could ever put her in condition again. From whatever side you looked at her, you couldn't have discovered a space of four square feet that had not been splintered with cannon-ball or grape. A glorious fight it must have been from which she now came limping home, but limping home victorious!

No doubt of that! From her three masts floated the

flag of the St. Malo Corsairs, a famous standard, blue, with a white cross. Against a scarlet quartering shone the silver ermine, *passante*, the emblem of the ever virgin city.

As the *Grand Tiphaine* passed the Vieux Quai, the wind lifted the three flags and spread them in the sun. The largest of the three, the ensign that is hoisted when a ship gives battle, had not escaped the brutal caresses of the enemy. The bunting too had been riddled into thread lace, *point d'Alençon*, or *d'Angleterre*—precious stuff!

Just the same, Julien Gravé's moans came louder and louder. Impatiently, the Chevalier Danycan with a quick move seized his hand:

"Come, come, comrade, enough groaning for one day! . . . Take a look, I beg you, at the tattered rag there fluttering from the stern of that old sabot of yours . . . well, I'll buy it of you, and gladly, if your loss has made you feel so poor. Fifty golden louis for it, friend. What do you say?"

Before the armourer could get out a word, there was new excitement in the crowd. The frigate had passed the Vieux Quai by now and was making ready to cast anchor. Sheet by sheet, down came all the canvas she still carried. The captain's voice was ringing out loud enough to be heard even farther than on the ramparts. And finally, as the brigantine dropped, the quarter-deck from which the orders were raining brisk as hail, lay clear to view.

Then when the crowd could see as well as hear him—every mouth there cried out the name of the captain—for he was not the captain they had expected to see!

"Thomas Trublet! . . . Thomas Trublet! . . ."

At a stroke Julien Gravé forgot Danycan, the fifty louis, the tattered flag. As quiet now as he had been noisy with complainings a second before, frowning, rudely shouldering the folk out of his path, he made his way to the front row of the onlookers.

"So it is," he wheezed, verifying the fact with his own

eyes. "So it is . . . Trublet is in command . . . What the . . ."

He stopped short. On the crew list the armourer had signed a few weeks before, the word "captain" had not been written down after Thomas Trublet's name . . . no . . . or even "lieutenant." . . .

With the back of his hand Julien Gravé wiped three drops of sweat from his brow. Then he looked about him. A sudden silence had fallen on the crowd; and in the groups of women and children, pressing close to the water's edge, there began a curious heaving like that of swells riding in from the sea. A minute passed, a long minute, time enough for the *Grande Tiphaine* to reef her spritsail, and throw out the big anchor. Finally, a shrill cry startled the air, the cry, the first cry, of the widowed; the sobs, the terrible sobs of the fatherless.

Gruff, but prompt to act, Julien Gravé made his way back to the group of burghers and notables.

"Gentlemen," said he, "is it your pleasure to come back with me to the town? In the first place, I must be at home to receive the captain of my ship. In the second, my declaration of booty—if there is any such, which I doubt—must be made to the officers of the Admiralty. My ship, I'll grant, does not appear to be burdened with gold. But will you come? You can bear me witness."

Through the postern of the Fief's Cross they passed, and down the street of the Butter-makers and the rue des Orbettes to the Grand' Porte, while behind them rose the sound of weeping and lamentation, let loose now in full chorus, and announcing to the whole town that, once more, sons of St. Malo had, as so many others before them, perished in the sea.

## CHAPTER II

THE boat's skiff scraped on the pebbles of the beach north of the fort; the two rowers briskly drove their oars into the sand to keep the craft from veering broadside to the breakers. Thomas Trublet let go the rudder, and clearing the rowers' benches jumped ashore.

As he was about to step under the arch of the bastion, he stopped and looked up. Above him stood the Christ of the fort, his great bronze arms outstretched. Bareheaded, hands joined finger to finger, Thomas knelt, and devoutly made his prayer.

Only after thrice repeating the last "Amen" did he cross the threshold of the city.

The incline leading within its bounds took a turn at right angles into the courtyard. In the centre of this inner court, Thomas Trublet halted again, and again removed his leathern hat. But this time he did not kneel. Thomas Trublet was not wont to bend his back before aught but Our Lady or Her Son, for Thomas Trublet was a pious man.

Now religion had nothing to do with his business in the courtyard. On the steps leading to the Assembly Hall stood Julien Gravé awaiting the captain of his *Grande Tiphaine*. And round about him stood a dozen or so of the city worthies. Thomas, drawing near, recognized his second godfather—baptism meant something in those days!—Guillaume Hamon, Lord of La Tremblaye; then he caught sight of Jan Gaultier, who at that very time

was building his fine house in the street of the Vicarage; and there was Pierre le Picard, and the Chevalier Danycan, and others, all armourers—and shipowners all. Thomas Trublet advanced respectfully toward them, until he stood at the foot of the steps.

The burghers watched the seafarer draw near, and when he was close upon them, bared their heads, every one of them, at the same moment, and not without good reason.

For Thomas Trublet's left arm hung in a sling, and a fresh-made scar stretched from ear to forehead across his broad face. His cheeks, ruddy enough by nature, were pale, almost bloodless. Tall, heavily built as he was, arms and legs thick with the bulge of muscles, he seemed, with his wounds, heavier, taller, thicker through than ever, exaggerated, you might say, enormous, and majestic withal. This great body of a man, roughly mauled as it had been, seemed swollen with the glory of war. And yet Thomas Trublet was of humble enough birth and by rights merely the boatswain of one of the frailest craft of the port. Nevertheless, prosperous Julien Gravé, owner of twenty fine hulls, kept his hat in his hand as he welcomed him.

"Thomas Trublet," said he, giving the fellow the full dignity of his name, according to a custom no man there would have wished to slight—"Thomas Trublet, may our Lord and His Blessed Mother help us both! Here you are, Thomas Trublet, by the Grace of One on High. What particulars from the ship's log?"

The burgher stood, left fist resting on his hip, the plume of his hat just clearing the ground. Thomas Trublet from the end of his one sound arm swung his own hat, which by way of ornament had but two long sailor ribbons.

"Sir," said he, after a pause, "no particulars, so you might say."

He stopped to swallow. Speech was evidently no special

talent of Thomas Trublet's, whose solid frame was of a surety better fitted to action.

"No particulars," said he once more, "save . . . save . . ."

Again he broke off, took a great gulp of air, then, heaving out the whole cargo:

"No particulars, save . . . that, like this, sir, as you might spit on your hand, we stumbled on a filthy Dutchman and sank the cur as anyone should . . . and that our captain, Guillaume Morvan, and Lieutenant Yves le Goffic, and seventeen more . . they went down with the rest out there. That's all, sir."

The leather hat at the end of his heavy right arm twice described an arc in the air, with proper respect at the mention of each name, and then descended on the waving tawny mane of Thomas Trublet. Having saluted the dead, Thomas Trublet deemed it little fitting further to prolong his salutation to the living.

But the armourer was pressing him with questions.

"Son Thomas," said he, "tell us more! What was this Hollander?"

"A cur, I tell you, sir! Guillaume Morvan, as soon as we sighted her, took it into his head that she was a merchantman . . . hiding her batteries she was, under canvas, to trick honest folk. We went for her. Two musket-shots away, she tore off the canvas and showed her teeth."

"And then?"

"Why then . . . we came near to having some dirty work. For Guillaume Morvan had not set up our cannon, except two long-range guns. Besides, the other one had eighteen-pounders, twenty-four of them. That gave her twelve shots a broadside to our eight, and ours only twelve-pounders. So then . . ."

"Go on, son Thomas!"

"We got a good raking, sir, top and bottom. I ran to do what most needed to be done—get our guns in

action, that is—take out the tampions, load, aim, fire. . . . Just then the Dutchman let go two broadsides, and well aimed they were too, for when I climbed onto the quarter-deck I found our topgallantsails cut down, and the maintops'l too, and the crew near panic. Some of them were jumping down the hatches to find shelter in the bottom of the hold. There was even one fellow—no need to tell his name—better spare his family, St. Malo folk—who was fumbling with the flag-gear, to haul down our ensign. . . . I went for him first. With my pistol to his head I talked to him . . . quite sharp . . . I had to."

"Good, Thomas! And then?"

"And then . . . why the same and more, sirs! Guillaume Morvan and Yves le Goffic were flat on their backs. There was no one to take command except me. So I just boarded the Dutchman, because he was still giving it to us, hot and heavy, and full in the belly, double broadsides, and with our small guns we couldn't say much. We couldn't have held out long, sir."

"I believe you, lad. But how did you board her?"

"With helm and sheet, I drove on her, sir. I was alone. The rest were in the hold. There was, so to say, nobody but me on the bridge. But as soon as we got close enough to grapple, I made quick work of getting them up on deck, every mother's son of them."

"How then?"

"With grenades, *sapergouenne*, that I slung down on them. They found it hotter below decks than above! You should have seen them come up the hatch! And so roaring mad they were, it was no trick at all to lead them across to the Dutchman's deck. Especially, as the fat boobies at the guns hadn't sense enough to let go their firing and give us a hot welcome. They had nothing but their ramrods to greet us with. It was soon over."

"Good again, I say! But the prize?"

"Scuttled, sir. Not enough crew to bring her in. We'd

already lost seventeen, as I told you, and there were forty, forty-five, wounded, the half of them crippled and no use at all. Anyway, the prize wasn't worth much. No cargo and an old hull."

"How many prisoners, Thomas Trublet?"

Thomas Trublet shifted his weight from one sturdy hip to the other, and smiled.

"No prisoners, sir! In the first place, there was no room. And then, the boys had had such a fright! They didn't know what they were doing there for a bit. And how could they keep folk on board the *Grande Tiphaine* who had seen St. Malo lads run to the hold for fear of the enemy? That couldn't be, sir. So, when they scuttled the Dutchman, I didn't bother about the crew. That's how it was, sir. Not worth talking about."

"Did they have boats?"

"Sure enough, sir! But broken up they were. They made a kind of a raft. Anyway those Holland rats are good swimmers. . . ."

Thomas Trublet burst into a roar of laughter.

The armourers too were laughing. Julien Gravé alone, out of propriety, exclaimed:

"Just the same, Thomas, boy . . ."

But the Sieur de la Tremblaye, the oldest of the men there assembled, laid a hand on his shoulder.

"*Hola*, comrade! . . . Have you already forgotten our *Fleur-de-Lys* that the Flessing took only a year ago? What did they do with the prisoners, those Flessings, eh? Tied a ball and chain around their ankles and threw them overboard into a hundred fathom of water . . . and all under some pretext, about a flag being lowered and raised again . . . as though no shot from a cannon had ever cut through a halyard by mischance!"

"Yes," said Jan Gaultier, in approval.

And Pierre le Picard scornfully added:

"Eh, fine pleading, gentlemen . . . and more words than the whole number of men drowned! . . . How now,

my compeers, are you afraid the mother of Dutchmen is deceased?"

As they were still standing on the steps of the Assembly Chamber, in the south corner of the Ravelin courtyard, the Noguette clock in the belfry of the Grand' Port struck two. Julien Gravé, moving down the steps, with easy familiarity slipped his arm through his captain's.

"Thomas Trublet," said he, "Thomas, my boy, bravely done. I love you much for this. Now, to the Admiralty with me. We'll see if we can't get the customs men to go aboard promptly so your crew can leave the ship and celebrate as it deserves this victory you've won for us. And when that is properly attended to, we'll have a talk, you and I."

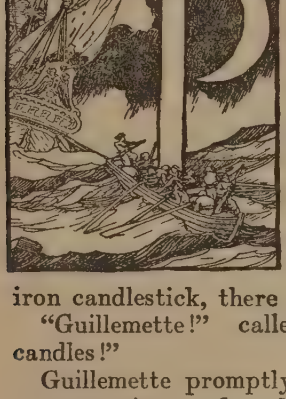
They walked away, the rest of the company at their heels.

But when, under the belfry, having passed through the wide archway under the two great towers, Thomas Trublet felt St. Malo ground under his feet, he suddenly let go the burgher's arm, and turned square about, his eyes on the rampart.

As though to balance the bronze Christ standing on the outer arch, facing the roadstead, a granite Virgin on the outer arch faced the town. Now this Virgin—Our Lady of the Grand' Porte, as some call her—has certainly accomplished more miracles with the tip of her little finger than all the saints ever did or will do, for all their holy relics and for all the pious pilgrimages people make to their shrines. . . . That is why Thomas Trublet, with never a care for the worthies awaiting his pleasure, at a stroke removed hat, shoes, doublet, and breech, and in his shirt, bare-kneed on the hard stones, the cord of his knife pulling tight against his neck, recited three times running all the prayers he knew that were suitable to be addressed to the Mother of God. Thus full faithfully he acquitted himself of the vow secretly made at the height of the recent battle. For at the very moment when

all was lost, none but the Virgin of the Grand' Porte had seemed powerful enough to remedy his desperate case. Who else could discomfit the triumphant Dutchmen, and give the men of St. Malo, hacked to pieces though they were, a victory else impossible—a victory therefore truly miraculous?

## CHAPTER III



POKER in hand, Malo Trublet leaned over the glowing hearth, and gave the brands a thorough raking. Freed of the clogging ashes, the logs crackled and clusters of sparks flew up under the hood of the huge chimney. Then the old man sank back again in his chair, resting his wide, dry, knotted hands on the carved oak of its arms. In spite of the four candles in the iron candlestick, there was very little light in the room.

"Guillemette!" called Malo Trublet, "snuff the candles!"

Guillemette promptly obeyed. The four flames, four separate times reflected, danced each in turn in her flax-blue eyes, and drew from the pure gold of the braids wound round her head a shining aureole.

Neatly snuffed, the candles glowed with a steadier light and pushed the shadows closer to the wall. All of the low-ceilinged room could be seen now, from the well-scrubbed floor to the dark oaken rafters.

A fine room it was, and almost new. The two cupboards and the chest of carved wood might well have graced the homes of rich folk. There were white curtains at the windows, although the latter were high and very wide, with many little square panes of glass, not one of them broken. On the shining oak of the table stood a jug of Island wine, newly drawn, with four bowls clustering round it. But as yet there was no man there

save Malo Trublet, head of the household and father of the family, and the two women, wife Perrine, and daughter Guillemette, the one spinning, the other at her sewing.

"Mother!" began Malo Trublet again, after a silence, "what is the hour by the cuckoo clock?"

The clock was close to the spinning wheel, its dial standing out but dimly against the dark wood of the wall. Perrine Trublet had to get up to see the hands.

"Past nine," said she, at last. Her voice was broken, a succession of short quaverings, no trace of resonance in it. Yet she was not so old. But forty-five years are like twice that number on the head and body of a fisherman's wife, when she's borne six boys and four girls.

Malo Trublet, now that he knew the time, knit his brows.

"In my young days," he proclaimed, "children were more prompt than this, when they returned from a cruise to spend the first evening ashore with their parents."

Guillemette's nose appeared over the edge of her handiwork. It was on the tip of her tongue to reply, but the respect due the old man checked her. Finally, mother Perrine herself plucked up courage to plead the cause of the dallying Thomas.

"The boy belike is held by his burgher, on account of papers to sign," said she. "To-day is little like the days agone. Nowadays, with all their scribbling, they waste more ink—these ship-owners, with their notaries and what all, than an apothecary making out a bill!"

Malo Trublet, who spoke but seldom, slowly shrugged his shoulders, and for a moment made no reply. But other minutes ran out. The cuckoo announced half-past nine. And Malo Trublet, thoroughly vexed by now, growled out:

"In a little while bell Noguette will be ringing curfew. And by that decent folk should be abed!"

This time neither mother nor daughter breathed a word. But Guillemette got up and furtively crept to the

window, from which her nimble fingers slid two movable panes of glass so she could look down the street.

The street—Hazel Tree it was called, for nearly the whole corporation of tanners lived thereon—was dark and winding and black as soot, and at this hour appeared deserted from end to end. Guillemette, leaning out, could distinguish, on the right, the high façade of the new house that the Armourer Yves Gaultier, younger brother of the Armourer Jan, had, for a whim, built far from the quarter of rich burghers, on the street of the Smiths, that adjoined Tan Bark Street, much as the arms of a square rule run together. No light there. . . . To the left the road took three successive turns, so that it was impossible to see the street of the Elm, near though it was. Guillemette, scanning the dark, not so dense in this direction, where an unseen window sent out long streamers of light to dance along wall and granite pavement, strained her sharp ears to catch whatever sounds might float towards her from afar; for it was down the street of the Elm that Thomas Trublet, so long awaited, could not help but come, when at last he turned homeward.

Guillemette, seeing nothing, heard nothing either except, confusedly and muffled by the distance, the usual noise of the taverns, all of them clustering, suitably enough, round the Grand' Porte—that is to say, within seven or eight street-lengths of the respectable dwellings among which was the home of the Trublets.

She was about to put back the panes she had taken out from their squares in the window, when, one could scarcely have said in what direction, the pavement suddenly resounded under the tread of boo heels. At the same moment a song, shrilly whistled, and in cadence to the steps ringing on the flags, pierced the silence of the night.

Guillemette, on hearing these steps and this song, with

one bound reached the middle of the room, clapping her hands and crying out joyfully:

"Father! Father! Don't be angry! Here he is!"

She was laughing boisterously now, as noisy as before, with her needle in her hand, she had been quiet and discreet. And old Malo, indulgent to this youthful outburst from his youngest born, turned his rough grey beard toward her, teasing:

"How do you know, sly boots, that it's your brother, eh? Have you seen him? More like it's some other brawler that's been shown the door of the tavern."

In a flare, indignant, she forgot to whom she spoke.

"Thomas—" she panted, "Thomas Trublet is no brawler! And anyone who calls him that insults your son and you with him, Father!"

Her blond braids, as she shook them furiously, danced along her back like angry snakes.

"Thomas shown the door of the tavern, you say! More like he'd show the door to the whole rout of them! Why, Father! Are you the only one in the whole town who doesn't know your own flesh and blood? Must you have the Hollanders called in as witnesses?"

She stopped for breath. But the old man was not angry.

"Peace, child!" said he.

Rather, he seemed pleased. This was so truly his daughter! And whatever she might say, he loved his flesh and blood, that red Trublet blood, quick to boil. With a shove that was almost tender, he pushed away the blue-clad shoulder, that showed well rounded under the Sunday fichu. For, to welcome brother Thomas, whom she loved as all girls love their brothers before a lover comes, Guillemette had dressed herself up as fine as ever she could.

"Peace," said Malo Trublet again. "And be quick, child, open the door. If you want to do him so much honour, best not to let him cool his heels too long!"

She ran to undo the bolts.

And now, facing his father, the Corsair sat in the second best armchair, at the other end of the hearth. Perrine and Guillemette, between them, filling out a half-circle, wore a happy mien and took good care for once not so much as to open their mouths, the better to hear the two men's voices—the old one strong as yet, but dry, the young one fresh and resonant. Questions and answers came in turn from both, all with that friendliness which there should ever be when father and son sit at talk together. No, of course it wasn't the boy's fault if the Admiralty, always so slow and ceremonious, had delayed until after sunset before giving permission for the crew to come ashore; and, according to tradition it was that, after crossing the Grand' Porte, the selfsame crew should "heave anchor" at the threshold of the first tavern they met, there to drink a full bowl, like the loyal sailors they were, to the King's good health. And how could any captain honourably take leave of his men before acquitting himself of this toast?

"Come boy," said Malo Trublet, "tell me this now. Are you really a captain—you that are no more than twenty-three years?" At this Thomas frowned.

"Of a truth," said he, Norman-like, for Perrine, his mother, was from St. Vast, where Malo had taken her to wife—often did the St. Malo fishermen land there during the fishing season. Thomas, therefore, was but half a Breton.

But Malo was no Norman, no, not even by a quarter. And he knew no tricks of talking or argument. One thing only he knew, how to be mulish. That he knew well, be it said.

"Of a truth?" he repeated, impatiently. "What may that be? I don't understand such jargon, not I. Come, are you captain or are you not? A straight 'yes' or 'no,' lad, is the way for a son to answer his father."

In a sudden flare of anger, Thomas clenched his fists.

But, instantly, he tamed the rage let loose, though the effort brought a deep color to his cheeks and made the fresh scar on forehead and temple throb, blood-red.

"Father," said he, his voice altered, "you are right. But to me Julien Gravé a while ago did not answer by yes or no. . . ."

His eyes—steel-coloured they were, like ocean swells under a stormy sky—glittered angrily, and the hearth-fire reflecting therein, they seemed to shoot out two red flames.

Angered as well, but not against his son this time, Malo Trublet drew his bushy brows together in a formidable frown.

"*Pardieu!*" said he. "And that? How would Julien Gravé pay that now?"

Pointing with both forefingers, he indicated the gashed forehead and the arm the boy still bore in a sling.

"Oh," said Thomas, scornfully, "who gives a rap for that? Anyway, the two misbegotten dogs who struck me are dead now!"

"*Jésus!*" murmured Perrine Trublet, her mother's eyes dilating with horror. "*Jésus*, have mercy! Boy, tell your old mother the truth. Is your arm really broken?"

But Thomas, his anger flown, burst into a sonorous laugh.

"*Nenni!* No, mother. The bone is too hard. Why, those old Dutch cabbage-cutters just knicked their blades on it. Don't worry, good mother Perrinou, nor you, my Guillemette. There's that much pigskin less, for a pistol-shot carried a bit of it away. But the good meat underneath, the lead didn't even nibble. . . . Eh, come now, what are you crying for? The fellows that'll get me . . . let me tell you this . . . their fathers and mothers haven't yet laid their sabots one by t'other beside the bed!"

The four candles of the iron chandelier did not give light enough to reveal how pale was that broad face of

Thomas, so ruddy habitually. Talk as much as he would though, Thomas had lost no less than two good pints of blood. His mother's eyes as she scanned his face, could no longer be deceived. But, for fear of angering her son, Perrine Trublet said no more about blows, given or taken.

There had been talk a-plenty of the absent—for no St. Malo family in those days ever saw all its members assembled at one gathering, save on Four-Thursday week. Besides, Thomas had no need to ask about his brother Jan, or brother Guillaume, or brother Bertrand, any more than about brother Bartelemy, all sailors like himself, and all four of them, at that very hour, cruising on distant seas: of the five Trublet boys—the sixth had perished, years ago, by shipwreck—Thomas had been the last to leave St. Malo; for the *Grande Tiphaine*, built to skim the coastal waters of Europe merely, and never intended for sailing farther than the Moorish coast or Maderia, had not plowed the seas three full months even, before her cruise came to an end as herein related—earlier, by far, than her owner had expected.

Thus Thomas, so recently from home, asked news of no relatives but his three sisters, older than Guillemette, all married, two at St. Vast, to Norman cousins, and the youngest of the three in Faou, a distant place in the remotest corner of lower Brittany. Neither Malo nor Perrine had much to relate about this sister, save by hearsay. As to the others, not much news either, since Malo, crippled with rheumatic pains, and sufficiently prosperous besides, thanks to the booty won by his sons, had sold bark and nets, and for good and all given up his fisherman's calling.

"Eh, Thomas, my boy," declared Malo Trublet, as a final reply to the Corsair's questions, "the family, once so numerous, is small enough now, until it shall please Our Lady to bring back your brothers. Never mind!

Here we are, the four of us, and yonder are four full bowls on the table. Island wine it is, that Guillaume and Barthelemy took from the galleon *Espagne* nigh seven years agone. A green youth, you were then, boy. But you've got your beard now. To your health, son!"

Thomas stood, and respectfully he touched his bowl to his father's. At that very moment, someone struck three resounding knocks on the door of the Trublet house.

## CHAPTER IV

IT was already well past ten. From the belfry of the Grand' Porte, the Noguette bell had long ago rung curfew, though, truth to tell, a goodly number of St. Malo folk paid very little attention to it, and were still running about the town as fancy led them, quite as though it were broad daylight. But these night-prowling Malouins, contemptuous of the laws and edicts many times pronounced by Monseigneur the Bishop and by the City Council, were content as a rule to keep their gambollings well within the confines of the streets where taverns were to be found; and la rue du Coudre—the street of the Hazel Tree—was not one of these.

Wherefore, at the sound of a knock on his door, at an hour he deemed little fitting either for making or receiving calls of honest intent, Malo Trublet hesitated, though but four seconds in all. And, quietly taking down from the wall a heavy old harquebus suspended there, he lit the fuse, before going to the door and opening the grilled wicket.

"Who knocks?" he then asked, ready for the worst. But a voice briskly answered:

"Your neighbour it is, Master Trublet, your neighbour and comrade who dwells where you know, on the street of the Vicarage."

Surprised, Malo Trublet put up his harquebus. Thomas, with questioning eyes stood beside his father.

"Open!" said the old man.

Into the doorway, as into a frame, stepped a tall silhouette, that of a robust man, and of handsome countenance, left fist resting on the hilt of his long sword. And from Thomas came a loud exclamation.

"Bah?" said he, agape with astonishment, "Monsieur le Chevalier Danycan? . . ."

Gaultier Danycan, Lord of Closdoré, younger son of my Lord de l'Espine (whose son later became Marquis de la Thebaudaye and Count du Plessis d'Alique) was by no means the richest of the St. Malo armourers—far from it!—but of them all, he was, without denial, the shrewdest, the boldest, and the luckiest. Mere younger son, of good birth but poor fortune, little inclined ever to vegetate in the manner of a plate-licker at another's board, as he might very well have done at his older brother's expense, he had at an early age risked on the sea, and most expediently, to the very last penny of the slim inheritance which came to him in lieu of patrimony; for which timid folk had blamed him much, but he, giving little heed to them or their like, had at the first stroke made good his venture, and promptly he doubled—this time risking his profit, over and above the first stake—then doubled again. To such good effect, privateering coming in with war when trade went out with peace, and all conditions contributing their share to the coffers of the venturesome chevalier, that Gaultier Danycan, while still young, had come to be numbered among the most prosperous burghers of St. Malo, his wealth giving every promise of waxing also, and even some day eclipsing the most ancient and brilliant fortunes of the city, nay, even of the province.

As he came into the low-ceilinged room, he was smiling from ear to ear. And at once, with four well-aimed compliments that flew straight to as many bull's-eyes, he brought joy to the whole household, father, mother, daughter, and son. And now he was draining his bowl of Island wine, delighting in the excellence of that glorious vintage, harvested on the galleons of the King of Spain.

"Comrade Trublet, *ventrebiche!* And have you enough left of this brave wine of yours to drink it as generously as we are drinking it this very moment when yon fine girl of yours chooses her wedding day?"

"We've but a half-barrel left, monsieur."

"Time then for Thomas to fetch a new supply from Ruyter's wine cellars!"

He burst into a great roar of laughter, clapping the boy on the shoulder.

Thus he chatted, talking a great deal and saying nothing. But everyone waited, knowing that a man of sense—and the Chevalier Danycan was thrice that—does not disturb himself or others, when once curfew has struck, simply to drink Island wine and utter pleasantries. And Gaultier Danycan, in good truth, offered his compliments just in the measure of courtesy. When he had fulfilled the requirements of good manners:

"Compeer!" said he, of a sudden, "there is no one here, I take it, who might be *de trop* even if we should begin telling secrets?"

He gave a glance at Perrine and Guillemette, and old Malo was for sending the women off to bed.

"Why no!" protested Danycan. "Malo Trublet, you don't catch my drift! Devil take me, if I wish to deprive myself of the pleasure I find in seeing before me, as at this moment, the kindly face of a prudent dame, and the pink cheeks of a pretty maid! By no means! I wish merely to give warning that the things I am going to say are to be kept for yourselves. Besides, they are to your interest, and equally so, be you men or women, unless I'm wide of the mark."

He unfastened his belt, and laid his sword on the table, as a man does when he wants to talk at his ease. Then he leaned over, elbows on table, facing Thomas Trublet now, into whose eyes he directed a look sharp as a gimlet.

"Thomas," said he then, without other preliminaries, "Thomas, my sailor-boy, tell me frankly, if so be you

can without offence to your spoken word, and the demands of honour: what did Julien Gravé, your bourgeois, say to you awhile ago? What did you reply? What is the agreement between you at this moment as we speak?"

His eyes did not let go the Corsair's. There's not a doubt that lying would have been uncomfortable business under the glance that pierced into the pupils opposite and searched about in the boy's head as though they would unlock even the chest of his most secret thoughts.

But Thomas Trublet was not minded to lie. All his anger, ill-strangled awhile since, leapt anew from heart to throat. He could not at first get out a single word, and stammered, the while both arms of his chair cracked under the hold of his clenched fingers.

Gaultier Danycan, imperturbable, watched these signs of rage.

"Boy," said he, after a moment, "cool down, and answer me. You need feel no shame or even embarrassment. I already know—I guess, at least—what you are going to say. For . . . why any pretences between us? . . . I saw Julien Gravé after he had seen you. There is little left for you to tell me."

Thomas Trublet, two fierce flames darting from under his knitted brows, peered questioningly at the chevalier.

"Yes," said Danycan. "Your bourgeois, too finicky as he is, made fun of you, didn't he? Or rather, he thought he was making fun of you. Come, come, my boy! Don't break your chair. This is no time for playing the woman, or groaning or complaining. Frankly now, how do things stand? Have you set your mark on the contract?"

"No"—Thomas could barely squeeze the syllable from his throat.

"Good . . . but, didn't you set your hand in your owner's hand, palm to palm?"

"No!"

"God be praised! Why then, boy, you're free! That hard-fisted bourgeois of yours is trifling along with you

to get all the stakes. But he'll lose . . . or I'm a numbskull! Come now, let's talk this over . . . it's more than time. That *Grande Tiphaine* of his, that's new so to speak, is gutted and done for, eh? *Pardi*, didn't I know it? . . . And what's the ship Julien Gravé wants to mount his guns on in her stead?"

"The *Galante*."

"The *Galante*! You don't mean it, son? The *Galante*, with at least fifteen years more than the *Tiphaine* in her timbers? By my oath, lad, my grandfather himself saw her launched, and that was in the times of our own King's father—whom God keep safe in Paradise! *Vertubleu*! A plague on all these misers and coin-hoarders, ever trying to shear wool from eggshells, as the saying is! . . . The *Galante* . . . but you'll be spending twelve hours a day at the pumps, and the rest of the twenty-four praying to your guardian saint to save you from rough seas!"

Silent, Thomas shrugged. Gaultier Danycan spoke truth, and evidently waited for neither approval nor contradiction. Besides, he was already off again, the only speaker in the dark-cornered room.

"And as to the captaincy of that old sabot, you'll not have it, my lad, not you. Let me tell you this, if old Julien Gravé hasn't had the courage to tell you himself. On the *Galante*, rotting though she is from topmast to keel, you'll be no more than lieutenant . . . with rights to an eighth share of the booty; lieutenant, yes, lad, that's to be your reward. And do you know who's to be your captain?"

Thomas Trublet's eyebrows rose.

"Old François Quintin, who never, his whole life long, has been able to sail out of Mer Bonne without scraping some paint off of every boat anchored between Ravelin and Talarde! . . . Yes, my fine Thomas, that's the man you'll have as master, Trublet though you be, and like as you are to make Ruyter himself turn tail. Why, you

ask? Because Julien Gravé's afraid of you, and on his guard against letting your courage and your boldness grow too big; because he has no taste for war, and you're too smitten with it for his liking. I can make out the case! As captain you'd fight too well, you'd strike too often, and get too many blows in return. And Julien Gravé's tender of his bottoms, and his ropes, and his canvas. He wants to win, every time, your bourgeois! But he daren't take a risk. And in the hands of a fellow like you, the old carcass of a ship would get too many hard knocks. Ropes and canvas . . . you'd eat them up, so many ells a day. So François Quintin's to be on hand, to keep his prudent cowardice between you and your game. He'll spare you lots of hubbub, my word for it. The big prizes will pass by under your very nose. . . . *Dame*, they carry cannon, and François Quintin'll have an eye to keeping clear of cannon-shots. . . . On the other hand, you'll catch up on the small fry. Herring boats are plentiful enough around the Zuyder Zee."

Slowly, as the talk ran on, the blood ebbed from Thomas Trublet's cheeks. They had been crimson with fighting rage when Danycan began; but now they were white as when the boy's fresh wounds had drawn the blood away from them; whiter, even. Greenish in fact; to such a degree that Danycan, who, while he spoke, watched young Trublet closely, concluded that, in place of the blood withdrawn there was nothing but bile, gall, and other poisonous humours, coursing at a furious pace through the lad's veins.

And then, playing his trump boldly, as his custom was, Gaultier Danycan, Lord of Closdoré, bourgeois of St. Malo, suddenly broke his talk off short, and, standing up, laid his hand, wide open, on Corsair Thomas Trublet's shoulder:

"Comrade!" said he, "enough talk. To the point now! Neither your Gravé, nor his *Galante*, nor yet his François Quintin are to your liking. Do I lie? No, it seems.

Well, other things and other folk will suit you better. I'm sure of that. What do you say?"

Grown suddenly calm and attentive, Thomas Trublet looked at Danycan.

"Yes!" said the Chevalier. "A word, and I have done. By 'other folk' I mean me—none else! 'Other things' . . . my frigate, the *Belle Hermine*. Plant your old skinflint in his tracks, and come aboard! I need fellows like you! And you need a bourgeois like me!"

He met the Corsair's eyes in a long gaze. And in his close-trimmed beard, that he wore in the fashion set by the late King, he smiled with satisfaction to see that, however fierce the rage that a moment before had been driving all coolness from the youth's brain, Thomas Trublet regained at a stroke his reason, his prudence, and even his Norman shrewdness, as soon as there was serious business to be dealt with.

"In truth," said he, slowly and clearly, "Monsieur le chevalier, you do me much honour. And there's no need for me to say that your *Belle Hermine* is a far different craft from Julien Gravé's *Galante*. Let's have all touching this matter brought out in the open, if you please, for there's nothing like a clear understanding between those that strike a bargain. In the first place, what, precisely, is the offer you're making me?"

Danycan brought his fist down on the oak table.

"My offer is this," said he. "You, Thomas Trublet, formerly boatswain of the *Grande Tiphaine*, in the service of Julien Gravé, I propose to make captain with twelve shares of the booty, and master, after God, of my frigate, the *Belle Hermine*, privateer; which frigate, with ninety foot of keel, carries twenty eighteen-inch cannon, and a crew of a hundred men, counting you in the number."

Thomas Trublet too stood up. He looked at his father Malo, and at his mother. Then, facing the chevalier anew:

"Hard and fast?" asked he briefly.

"Hard and fast!" said Danycan. "And as proof, here's

my hand on it, and that's worth an oath. On this matter, all is said, and God to our aid! Your hand on it if you choose, and if you don't choose, keep your hand for another bargain, and all in good-will."

"By the Holy Virgin of the Grand' Porte!" said Thomas Trublet, "I take your offer!"

With all his might he struck his hand into the outstretched palm, which bore the impact without flinching.

## CHAPTER V

"CAPTAIN," said the Chevalier Danycan, "captain, for such you are, listen, and hold fast to what I am going to say; for after to-night we shall scarce have time to chat as we please. Between now and Sunday our *Belle Hermine* must make her toilet. Count it out on your fingers. Four days that gives you to attend to every particular."

Thomas Trublet, duly counting on his fingers, gave a shrug.

"How far advanced are the preparations?"

"All is done, and the frigate could hoist anchor at the next high-water if I chose. Your lieutenant made a good job of it. He's an able fellow. Louis Guénolé he is, the son of the smith on the *rue de la Herse*. You know him, Thomas. He knows you too, likes you and will take orders from you gladly."

Astonished, old Malo raised his head and looked at the armourer.

"Louis Guénolé?" said he. "Little Louis a lieutenant, you say? A youngling such as he?"

But Danycan with his palm struck the guard of his sword, as it lay on the oak table. The steel rang out a warlike sound:

"Youngling?" said he. "Yes, crony, young he is, thanks be to God, for Fortune is a trollope, and it's the youngsters know best when to tumble her! How now, Malo Trublet, do you think we need greybeards to sweep

the seas and that it's for old folk to carry out the daring exploits that are to bring us riches? Not so! Your son and the Guénolé lad, they're the men for me. And, save for some few sea-wolves, good to reef sails from the yard-arm in dirty weather, I want no older men than they on my *Belle Hermine:* because, when, the chase over, she comes back to St. Malo, I want to see my *Belle Hermine* laden with gold fit to sink her!"

Hereupon he slapped his sword-hilt, and looking into the Corsair's eyes, smiled once more with satisfaction: for those eyes, as though they were in advance reflecting the glittering cargo he spoke of, were aflame with ardour and lust of gold.

"And now," the chevalier began again, after a pause, "let's make an end of talk. The frigate is ready, fit for any service; the crew's enrolled, and you'll find them a good lot. For the rest, if there's anything on your ship that doesn't suit you, you have four days for unloading, reloading, turning it topsy-turvy. Do as you like; she's yours. God despatch me straight to hell if you are not at this very moment—after God, of course—the master in all things on that ship! But Sunday, at the morning tide, have a care: let each man be at his post ready to get under way! He's a knave who backs out now. You gave me your hand on it."

"My hand on it," said Thomas.

He was thinking; and, after a silence:

"As to our destination," he asked "am I to choose that too?"

"No," said Danycan.

Again a silence. The chevalier considered, one after another, the four attentive faces, sounding the four pairs of eyes fastened on his.

"Bah!" said he at last. "Anyone else . . . Julien Gravé, at any rate . . . would cover this with mystery as thick as November fog on the channel. And why, I ask you? Since the five of us here have much to gain if

we know how to keep our own counsel! No, Captain Trublet, you have no choice there. I have selected your port of destination. But no fear! If I chose, I knew how to choose. Son, I'm not sending you to the Zuyder Zee to fish for herring boats and to be fished for by Ruyter himself. The King knows what he's doing when he fights the Provinces, not in Holland, but in Alsace, and in the depths of Germany. And I'm going to do as he does, puny that I am, *sapergouenne!* Our *Belle Hermine* is not going to sit in front of their rat-holes watching for the Dutch vermin to crawl out. Not she! The dirty devils brag of being—the phrase is theirs—the 'waggoners' of the sea. Their ships are firing broadsides on every ocean—proudly, as though whatever was salt water was their own—and they pirate the trade of other nations. . . . Isn't it true? In the West Indies, for example, there is, so far as I know, very little Dutch soil; and yet, in despite of treaties, the tricolor floats in the breeze there on every hand, and insolently covers many a cargo that should belong only to us, subjects of the King of France, or to our friends, subjects of Their Majesties of Spain and England. Thomas Trublet, you are to show to that insolence the limits beyond which it dare not go!"

"In the Indies?" asked Thomas.

"In the West Indies, yes: in the Antilles of America. That is the region you are to set sail for as soon as you're clear of the Channel. Those are my orders to you. But I stop there. When you have cast anchor under the Tortoise—that's an island over yonder—you have fulfilled your instructions. The rest is for you to decide. So, use your own judgment, and bear in mind only this by way of general orders: empty the enemy's holds, and fill your own."

They were all silent now. Under beetling eyebrows old Malo was trying to imagine what those almost fabulous Antilles must be like. He had never touched them, even in his most adventurous fishing voyages. Bewildered, the

two women listened—the girl glimpsing, in a marvellous picture, parrots, monkeys, and other incredible beasts that populate the islands, and that Thomas would certainly bring back by the dozen—and mother Trublet, as mothers do, seeing tempests, shipwrecks, sharks, cannibals, and malignant fevers.

As for Thomas, he was dreaming, chewing the cud of the chevalier's words and finding them sweet. A shrewd fellow, Thomas Trublet. And Gaultier Danycan grew more and more aware of it with every moment that passed. The bourgeois who had knocked at the door awhile since had come chiefly to attach to his own fortunes the daredevil lad whose recent exploits were filling St. Malo with admiration and pride. But chance, as usual, had cajoled Danycan, when he found that this daredevil was an able and shrewd fellow into the bargain. Every word that dropped from the lad's mouth gave proof of it, and his silence also.

He was seeking information now, for the moment, in brief, precise questions:

"Out yonder, sir, what are the prizes and what the risks? I ask, the better to serve you; for I know nothing of those parts."

Gaultier Danycan, with a shrug, approved his captain.

"Surely, you ask as a man should. And I would like to know many things that I do not, to teach them to you. No matter! You'll teach yourself, and much, out yonder. The essential is this: in the American Indies, there are, as I told you, French, English, and Spaniards, who have the right to be in those parts; and Hollanders, who have no such right. Many vast territories are there, the island of San Domingo, half-French and half-Spanish, the island of Jamaica, English since some years, and Cuba. But I mentioned first the Tortoise. Tortuga is, I have been told by people coming back from there, very little, almost nothing, as to extent. St. Malo might fit tighter in it than it does in its own belt of ramparts. But

it isn't the size of a pasture that makes brave sheep, as we Malouins well know, since our city makes far more noise in the world than its acres account for. Just so, the isle of the Tortoise, in renown, is worth more than Jamaica, San Domingo, and Cuba put together. And that is why, my boy, you'll cast anchor first in this blessed spot: La Tortue, capital of the Antilles—and there you will have speech with the folk and instruct yourself as you desire, in all things good to know."

Thomas, with a shrug, in his turn gave approval.

"This Tortue, I take it, is French?"

"French! That it is!" answered Danycan. "The King keeps his Governor there—Governor, he is, of the Tortoise, and San Dominican coast, for His Majesty. When last I had news of it, said Governor was the Sieur d'Ogéron, of whom I heard much praise. That was in 1666, when the Governor of Martinique, who happens to be a relative of mine, came to court, at orders from Monseigneur Turenne, to give an account of his governing. Since then, I've had no news . . . French? Gad, boy, she's that! More French perhaps than many other lands where our King is obeyed . . . although, in those parts, he is not always obeyed to the letter, our King."

Astonished, Thomas Trublet questioned Danycan with a look.

"Not exactly to the letter, no!" repeated the bourgeois. "Do not wonder at that, captain! The Tortoise is, above all else that it may be, fief and homeland of Corsairs, and of the boldest Corsairs that ever raised a flag. The rogues have some right to His Majesty's indulgence, and they use all they can get of it. Do as they do, boy, and I'll make no complaint."

On the broad face opposite him, on the burning cheeks were showed, like fresh blood, the oblique scar traced by a Dutch sabre, a sudden smile. . . . And then Thomas Trublet had another question.

"Who are they, these Corsairs of the Tortoise?"

"The Filibusters," said the Chevalier Danycan. "Remember that name. Filibusters! As to the individuals who bear it, you will soon know them."

For a while now the chevalier had been standing; he turned to put on his sword-belt, fastening it so the blade should hang to one side; and he made sure that the weapon slipped easily from the scabbard, ready to his hand. In spite of the city watch, untoward encounters were none too rare by night. Gaultier Danycan, wrapping his cloak around him, left his right arm free, for whatever might chance.

"And now, my hosts," said he, "to other meetings! A good night to you all, and may St. Vincent not be too busy, watching over the streets of our city, to guard you well. Goodman Malo, we'll drink other wine, worthy to follow this of yours, when your son comes home from the islands! Dame Perrine, and you, pretty maid, I kiss your hands. As for you, my boy, until to-morrow, please God!"

And he went away.

## CHAPTER VI

ILENCE now in the house on the rue de la Coudre; silence and sleep. . . .

As was fitting, Thomas and Guillemette had been the first to climb the wooden stairs leading to their rooms. Then mother Perrine had followed. And finally Malo, head of the Trublet household, after testing with his own two hands, bolt, lock, and cross-bar on the front door, had blown out the candles yet flaring in the iron candlestick.

After which all was still.

Nevertheless, a while later there was a slight stir in the sleeping house; a sound of footsteps, furtive, felt-shod, muffled, little likely to disturb the old people. A yellow ray from a lantern flashed on the room below, and Thomas and Guillemette, she in her petticoat, he, wholly clad, ready for a foray out into gay haunts, stood laughing at one another, merry and sly. . . . This was not the first time his sister had helped Thomas in his nightly escapades. Before he was twenty—Guillemette was in those days not yet fifteen—Thomas had many a night crept out for a round of the taverns, and other resorts too, not mentioned to Guillemette. It was certainly not on the night of such a day as this just passed—a day that had brought him a captain's plumed hat and sword in exchange for his boatswain's whistle—that Thomas Trublet was going to bed with the chickens—not at least before he had taken a turn through the town, and drunk a glass with his mates.

"So be it!" Guillemette was saying. "But have a care not to make a noise when you come in. Throw some gravel against my window, and I'll unbolt the door."

"Bah!" said Thomas lightly, "why so much trouble? Leave the double bar off rather, and the bolts pushed back. I'll take the key, and there's an end to the matter."

"Not I! There are too many evil folk a-prowl—ne'er-do-wells, such as you, naughty brother!" She was laughing, with a threatening finger. "Confess! You've assaulted the doors of peaceful dwellings yourself, eh, my fine brigand?"

He seized her by her wrists and smacked her soundly on both cheeks.

"Scratch-cat! For a joke perhaps, as you ought to know!"

"Oh, don't I!" said she. "But when old Dugué, who knew nothing about what was going on, took down his harquebus, was it for a joke too that one of you jesters ran a sword through his old body? Your blade it was too did it!"

"Stop your talk!"

He was smothering her now as he held her, kissing her the while, all over her face, calling her names, too, "devil's baggage"—

"You lie!" said she, indignant.

Then, suddenly curious:

"And how about Anne-Marie, your pet, what of her, now? Is it to see her?"

Her lips curled in disdain. For Anne-Marie Kerdoncuff, once her bosom friend, had later let Thomas make too free with her. And be it through honest virtue or through jealousy, Guillemette, who had nothing to say against Thomas's adventures with women or maids unknown to her, had found it very little fitting that Anne-Marie should be brother Thomas's sweetheart.

"Answer me!" she insisted, in a flare of anger: "Are you going to see that jade?"

Thomas swaggered.

"If I choose," said he. "You're a fine girl, my faith, to hoot at that one! . . . What has she done to you?"

Guillemette was scornful.

"To me?" she hissed, her mouth drawn to a point. "To me? Anne-Marie? What could she do to me? Do you think that I so much as speak to her? Holy Virgin! Not one of us girls, at least no one who respects herself. . . ."

Thomas, ironical, cut her short.

"Gossip-monger, go on! I'm listening! . . . You weren't as thick as hide and shirt, you and she, were you? And you trying now to paint her black as the chimney! There's some snake in the grass! You two've been pulling one another's hair out, likely! And no doubt you got as good as you gave. . . . She's taller and stronger than you, Anne-Marie is. . . ."

Furiously, Guillemette pinched him with all the strength of her fingers.

"Got as good as I gave, what, me? Oh, you make me laugh! But when I get my nails into her eyes, I'll make her yell for mercy, that . . . that bawd of yours! If you want her eyes scratched out, just send her my way!"

"Be still, vixen! Stop your noise, I tell you! Another word, and there'll be no need of Anne-Marie to box your ears!"

He was pointing toward the wooden stairs leading to the door of the old people's chamber. Abashed, Guillemette hung her head. And then Thomas thrust his fists at her back by way of caress.

"Simpleton!" said he. "Big baby. . . . No! I'm not going to see Anne-Marie."

"Truly?" She was mistrustful.

"As true as Sunday's mass day! You know I don't lie to you . . . not often!"

"So, you've had enough of her?"

"No. But I'm after someone else."

"Oh!" said she, pleased and angry, both. "Now I believe you! But what a woman-chaser! Bah! I'll forgive you this time . . . because of the face she'll make when she hears about the other one, your Anne-Marie!"

"She won't know."

"I'll tell her myself when we meet at the fountain!"

"*Ah là!* Marie Rattle-tongue! You can't get along without a few slaps and bruises, can you?"

"You can't either, it seems!"

Face to face, they were laughing again.

"Who's the new one?" Guillemette persisted.

But Thomas, slyly, whispered:

"Who is it? Someone who doesn't babble as you do, magpie! Here, let me pass, I'm off! It's past midnight, and there'll be no one at the tavern!"

But she hung on him.

"Tell me . . . or I'll not let go of you!"

He wrestled with her.

"Look to your skirts, wench! Or it's you will be yelling 'let go!' "

Red as fire, she struggled.

"Be off with you, bad brother! A fine way to treat your sister! Pirate!"

"Be still, you baggage!"

Roughly he kissed her, and won the door.

## CHAPTER VII

T the saloon of the Grand' Porte, Julien Gravé's sailors were still drinking, every man of them. To Thomas Trublet, as he came in, they roared a welcome.

"Fine and fit," said he, in reply to their greetings. "Here I am, as I said I would be. Who gives me room?"

He swung himself over two benches and a table, his cape already thrown back over his shoulders. The scabbard of his sword struck a full glass, upsetting it.

"By—" swore the owner of it. "Trublet, your blade's thirsty!"

Trublet laughed. At the back of the room a man, surrounded by several companions, rose quickly from his bench.

"Blade?" said he. "So we're a gentleman now, are we?"

Thomas Trublet, who had already sat down, stood up again.

"Is anyone speaking to me?" he asked drily,

But the other, who could be prudent, it seemed, thought better of replying. Thomas thereupon sat down. His men, grouped around, were brandishing their glasses.

"*Pardi*, there, Trublet, comrade! We're waiting for you!"

He tossed off his glass. Then, as the tavern wench brought another jug, he affected to find his sword-belt troublesome, and unfastened it, laying his sword on the

table—as he had seen the Chevalier Danycan do awhile ago.

"*Sangbleu!*" he swore on his own account. "Thirsty or not, this rapier of mine deserves a drink, for our deceased captain, Guillaume Morvan wore it! And a good use he made of it too!"

"Like yourself!" cried his listeners. "Here's to the blade! Drink to the rapier!"

Some of them drank to Guillaume Morvan's good steel, others to Thomas Trublet's. Thomas, well-pleased, struck his sword-hilt, as Danycan had done.

"You're right, boys! The blade is mine, as you agree, by right of inheritance. And as Guillaume used it, so shall I, a captain like himself."

The haughty motto graven by the Duchess Anna on the granite of her castle came to his mind. "Let growl who will, thus shall it be: as my pleasure is!" (*"Quiconque en grogne, ainsi sera; c'est mon plaisir!"*)

A burst of "*Hourras!*" greeted his quotation. One of the sailors, with a furious crash, brought a huge fist down among the wine jugs.

"*Hardi*, there!" he roared. "This round is for Captain Thomas!"

A voice, from no one knew exactly what quarter, inquired:

"Captain, is he? Are you certain of that?"

"Captain I am," said Thomas imperiously. "Let growl who will!"

But no one growled. Quite the contrary. The whole group of the *Grande Tiphaine's* sailors broke into noisy enthusiasm.

"And right he should be!" came in roars from every side.

"Give orders, captain! Down with the Dutch! *Vive le Roi!* A dung-heap for Ruyter! Thomas, take us aboard with you! We're your men!"

"Devil blast me if I don't," swore Thomas. "You've showed what stuff was in you!"

"When do you heave anchor?" inquired one less drunk than the others.

"To-morrow, if so I choose!" said Thomas, promptly.

From the group at their cups in the back of the room came a noise of argument.

"Sit still, I tell you!" This from the man who a short while before had mocked at Thomas Trublet's sword-wearing. "Keep quiet, I say, and wait—time later! Don't you see he's drunk?"

"Yes," approved another. "And look at him! He's in a dog's temper with his liquor, like his father before him, and the rest of his tribe!"

But the man who had risen was not of a mind to give in to his companions.

"Dog's temper, cat's temper," he said, "it's all one to me. Didn't you hear him with his talk of heaving anchor to-morrow? I'll speak with him this very night, and drunk or not, he'll listen!"

"Vincent, you're crazy! What are you thinking of? This is no time to pick a quarrel."

"Who's talking of picking a quarrel? Not much! It's not from me the quarrelling would come, Our Lady to witness!"

Still standing, he freed himself from the hands trying to hold him down. Advancing on the group of the *Grande Tiphaine*, he pushed his way through to where Thomas Trublet was sitting, and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Thomas!" There was decision in the tone, though the voice was muffled, and a little hoarse.

A pause. The man thus addressing Thomas had not spoken very loud; yet everyone had heard him, perhaps because of that odd note in his voice. And no sooner had he spoken that "Thomas!" than not a man there had any further desire to shout and sing: every one of them

seemed to feel that the time for tippling was over, and that something grave was to happen.

Thomas Trublet had at first turned brusquely around on his bench. To be thus interrupted in the midst of a drinking bout among his sailors roused all the violence of his nature; he was about to hurl himself on the spoil-sport. So he stood up, fists clenched.

But at sight of the fellow his anger crumpled and he burst into a great laugh.

"What!" said he "You, Vincent Kerdoncuff? What are you doing in yonder corner instead of coming here to drink with us?"

Reassured, the crowd broke into noisy approval. Vincent Kerdoncuff alone did not join in the chorus.

"Thomas," said he, "you're a good fellow; many thanks. But, for the moment, I have little care for drinking. There's a matter I want to discuss with you . . . a serious matter. Didn't you say a while ago that you were pulling up anchor to-morrow?"

"That's what I said."

"So, we'll have to talk it out this very night, you and I, alone, and, God willing, in all friendliness!"

"In all friendliness?" repeated Thomas, more coldly still than Vincent, though Vincent had never put much warmth into that friendship. "In all friendliness? Vincent, my lad, if friendliness there is, and so I hope, why cut short our merry-making, and leave this place, where, by my gullet, the wine is not half-bad? Come here rather, sit down with us, and let's have your story!"

But Vincent Kerdoncuff shook his head.

"No," he said. "That cannot be. Thomas, this story concerns us alone. It is for you and me to settle, and no other. And that's why I say to you—'Come with me!' Wherever you choose, but alone, as I am alone."

Thomas stood, making no more argument, but roughly jolting the table, and upsetting a fleet of jugs.

"*Sangbleu!*" said he, when he was up on his feet, taking a glance around at his sailormen. "With these boys of mine I have few secrets. And they can all bear me witness that this time too, if I play at mysteries, it's not my choice!"

Justly the "boys" agreed with him, some even grumbling audibly enough. And one of them cried out:

"A dung-heap for Ruyter, and dung on his like, here or anywhere else!"

"Peace!" commanded Trublet, mildly enough.

"Friend Thomas, you're greatly popular. . . ." Vincent Kerdoncuff somewhat tartly admired.

Ready at last to stride over the table and follow his "friend" Vincent, Thomas Trublet did not forget to gird on his sword—the sharp-worn blade of the deceased Captain Guillaume Morvan—and this he did with the same gesture as Gaultier Danycan had used a while back in the house of old Malo.

## CHAPTER VIII

THOMAS TRUBLET went first. Barely had the door closed behind them, when he stopped short and faced Vincent Kerdoncuff who was at his heels.

"Well?" said he, ready to talk.

But Vincent Kerdoncuff, in less haste, stretched an arm toward the far end of the dark street.

"Let's walk, rather," said he. "There are too many folk here hanging about their doors; too many pairs of ears."

The Grand' Rue was in truth a jovial street, containing within its limits all the night revelry of the town. It was there that, after curfew, all the troublesome crews of good fellows, the terror of peaceful folk, and chief torment of the watch, assembled for their pranks, their drunken revelries, orgies, and brawls. The Grand' Rue was wide, and fairly straight, having nothing of the menacing aspect of those tortuous cutthroat streets, fittingly known as *rues chaudes*, that one finds in other towns. The cloth, however, does not make the monk. And however honest and respectable St. Malo's Grand' Rue might appear, it was lined from ramparts to Chapterhouse wall, with fifteen or twenty doors always wide open, night and day, to the aforesaid revellers whenever they might chance to be in a humour to empty tankards, tumble a whore, and make a tour of the gaming houses—to wind up the evening by cutting one another's throats.

"Farther then!" said Thomas Trublet.

"Let's go a bit farther!" said Vincent Kerdoncuff.

They went the length of the Grand' Rue and reached

the bounds of the Chapter-house that, with all its dependencies, was like a small ecclesiastical town tucked within the burgher-military city outside its walls. They followed the street of the Fief's Cross, and that of St. Jean of the Iron Gate, as far as the Three Graveyards. Vincent was for going on and following along the north rampart, but Thomas judged that this was walk enough for the evening.

"What the devil!" said he. "It strikes me there are no ears here, or eyes either!"

The spot was in truth solitary enough. The town had not reached out beyond this point; above the low roofs of the rue du Chapeau Rouge, short as it is, Kerdoncuff and Trublet could see the battlements of the Fortress Quic en Grogne, and likewise hear through the darkness the growling of the sea.

"Talk, will you, if it's talking's we're here for," Thomas began again, with a touch of sarcasm now. "Or do you intend to climb this wall here, so we may converse beyond the bounds of the living?"

He pointed to the wall of the graveyards, less high by a fathom than the walls of the ecclesiastics' domain.

"No," replied Vincent Kerdoncuff, in a serious tone, "this will do here, if you will listen."

"Begin then!" said Thomas Trublet.

They were facing one another in the middle of the road. Around them the shadows of the houses huddling close upon one another made a profound obscurity. But the Three Graveyards formed a triple garden and the moon, though aslant over the tomb-scarred field, scattered its rays over the yews and over the willows. The wall was too low to cast more than a line of shadow, so that the street too had a share of the light of the open space. Thomas and Vincent, issuing from the dark streets of the close-built town could now see one another almost as plain as day.

Then it was Vincent Kerdoncuff who spoke.

"Thomas!" said he, without any preamble whatsoever, "Thomas! . . . My sister Anne-Marie . . . what have you done to her? And what are you going to do?"

His voice, still hoarse, and with a slight tremble in it, nevertheless rang out with odd forcefulness. Thomas, taken unaware, and for the moment out of countenance, took a step backward.

"Your sister?" he stammered, as though not understanding. "Your sister? What of her? And what have I to do with her?"

But Kerdoncuff moved forward brusquely to within reach of Trublet, and seized him by the arms.

"Be still, by God!" he cried with sudden violence. "Be still, lest you lie! I know what there is to know. The wench told me everything. . . . And well I broke her hide for her that day! How I came not to kill her, I know not. . . . But never mind that. Now it's for you to answer. Her part is done. Thomas, you had her, and had her a maid. Tell me then: what are you going to do with her?"

He had not let go of Thomas's arms. Thomas, moreover, made no attempt to free himself.

"How do I know?" said he, embarrassed, and more than that, annoyed. "How do I know, of a truth? Vincent, listen to me now, and don't be angry, for we'll gain nothing by anger either on your part or on mine, in this business. Your sister spoke to you, you say? Then I have no cause to hold my tongue. Well then—yes! I did take her. But not by force! God alive! far from it. I swear to you that she was most consenting. Ask her rather which of us it was that began to run after the other! So much for that, consequently. . . . As for the rest, I've told no tales. There's not a neighbour knows. So, where's the harm? Vincent, comrade, think rather that Anne-Marie is not the only girl I've taken in like manner. Now none of the others has made any noise about it, and they have done wisely; for, of a surety, not one of them

has suffered any harm, and those that so wished have none the less married well. What more would you have? Listen to me, then. Your sister is of the same stuff as the others. Leave her alone, don't take this matter hard, for it's a matter that wholly concerns her, and you not at all."

Thomas Trublet having thus spoken, took a deep breath, and, pleased to have delivered himself of all there was to say, broke into a laugh.

A long speech it had been. Thomas Trublet did not speak easily, save when he was first warmed to his subject. Now this was not the case here. He had, therefore, to take his time about it, interrupt himself, blow like one plunged into cold water, and search for words. Vincent Kerdoncuff, mute and sullen, let him have his say, listening, but not hearing perhaps, sunk as he was in a kind of sombre reverie. The two men still gripped one another, Vincent's hands grasping the other's arms. But to this neither Thomas nor Vincent gave heed.

Thomas Trublet then, having spoken, laughed aloud. Vincent Kerdoncuff, suddenly emerging from his reverie, heard that laugh; and at the moment he heard it, was like a bull at sight of a red rag. Such fury shook him from head to foot that he gave a kind of jump, stumbled, and nearly fell. His tongue, stiff in his mouth, could utter no single word. He was able to stammer merely, his clenched fingers bruising the flesh of him who had laughed. Thomas, astounded for a moment, was not slow to offer resistance.

"*Hola!*" he cried, twice, raising his tone. "*Hola!* Comrade! Let go of me, let go! *Mordieu!* Will you let go, you brute!"

They struggled. Thomas was, no mistaking it, the stronger. But a furious man counts for three. Vincent kept his advantage, and held his grip. Thomas, powerless to free himself, with a jerk reached the handle of his rapier, and swore anew.

"*Mordieu* and *sangdieu!* Vincent, let go of me, or I'll kill you!"

Vincent had seen the gesture. He uttered a savage cry, let go, took a leap backwards, and unsheathed—all in a twinkling. In the moonlight the bare sword glittered. A long blade it was, and strong, a good sword for a fight, no dress-parade toy, which St. Malo burghers never wore anyway, leaving this luxury to gentlemen, and going out unarmed save when they had need of weapons. Thomas saw the sharp point within six inches of his throat. Nevertheless, he kept his own sword in its sheath, and crossed his arms on his chest, quite calm again, and cool, as always when real danger was in sight. Kerdoncuff, knees bent, arm extended, was about to rush on him. Thomas stopped him short, with another laugh, a different laugh this.

"Drive in your steel!" said he, disdainful. "When you have made an end of me, your sister will be happy!"

Kerdoncuff took a step to one side, lowered his hand. Still disdainfully, Thomas Trublet went on:

"If it's murder you want, well and good! If it's something else, out with it! You asked me questions enough, and I answered you. I'll ask *you* some questions now, it's your turn to reply!"

But Vincent Kerdoncuff could not speak. He was still panting, stammering. Finally:

"My sister"—the words came back to him—"my sister —yes or no . . . will you marry her?"

Thomas Trublet still stood, arms crossed on his breast.

"Is that all?" he replied coldly. "Is that all you had in your throat? No need of so much butter to make a quarter pound. . . . Am I going to marry her, you ask, Anne-Marie? No. I am not going to marry her. Nor does she want me any more now than I want her. That nonsense between us is over with. I have said it once, and I repeat: Vincent, don't meddle in all this! Your sister will marry whom she pleases, for she's a fine slip of a girl,

rich, and of good name, I flatter myself! As for me, I shall marry no one. That is my pleasure, and I am wise in this at least: for marrying is no business for a Corsair!"

Vincent raised his hand. Thomas again saw the sword point at his throat. Impassive, he repeated, very distinctly:

"No. I shall not marry her. No."

"Have a care then!" stammered Vincent, shaken again with his trembling.

But Thomas was by degrees losing patience.

"Have a care yourself!" he said abruptly, making an effort still to remain calm. "Have a care, yes! I don't fancy threats. And by the true God, you do wrong to threaten me!"

Vincent, as though in spite of himself, bent his left knee, and moved his right foot forward as fencers do to bring the sword into play. His arm, half-bent, slowly reached forward, and Thomas having yielded not an inch, the outstretched blade reached his chest, touching the cloth of his doublet.

At the same instant both cried out. Vincent, his voice almost inaudible, said:

"Marry her, or you die here!"

And Thomas, his anger, too long contained, bursting out suddenly as a grenade bursts:

"Get out of my way, or stay where you fall!"

What followed took no more time than a *requiescat in pace*. As Vincent slid forward, Thomas jumped aside—but too late to escape a scratch along the shoulder—a scratch that flecked Vincent's sword with red. With a howl of rage, in one single gesture Thomas tore his own sword from the sheath, whipped the other rapier aside, thrust out his arm, and drove three feet of steel into Vincent's right side. With not even a sigh, the latter sank to the ground like a felled ox.

## CHAPTER IX

OLY VIRGIN of the Grand' Porte!" swore Thomas Trublet, sword in hand. From its lowered point dark drops dripped one by one to the ground. Before him lay Vincent Kerdoncuff, face upward, arms stretched out crosswise.

"*Sainte Vierge de la Grand' Porte!*" swore Thomas, a second time.

Mechanically, he wiped the dripping blade, and sheathed it. One knee on the ground he bent over the motionless body.

"No question, he is dead. . . . ."

Of a truth, so it appeared. A double wound: for the rapier, entering under the right armpit, had driven through up to the hilt, its point piercing out again through the left shoulder. From both openings blood was flowing in great gushes.

"Dead, sure enough."

Thomas, who with both hands had raised the already livid head, let it fall back. And the jolt, pressing some hidden spring of the body, caused a fluttering of the purplish eyelids. A gleam of life glowed feebly in the glazed eyes.

Astonished, Thomas Trublet leaned again over the face that once more was motionless. Then the bloodless lips stirred, and in a voice that was no more than a whisper, Vincent Kerdoncuff spoke:

"Thomas Trublet," the whisper said, "you have done for me. But I'm a true man. It was I who sought you.

Go in peace. For I tell you, you have no blame in my death."

He coughed, and blood stained his lips, for the moment like in hue once more to those of the living. Thomas, at sight of the red foam, besought him to be still, for every word issuing from this bleeding mouth visibly hastened the end, near enough by all odds.

But Vincent, just the same, spoke again.

"Thomas Trublet," he said, "my sister . . . Anne-Marie . . . will you marry her?"

In the glazing eyes still glowed a burning anxiety. Amazed, Thomas in spite of himself raised his eyebrows. And to the mute question Vincent replied, with an effort that brought to his blood-stained lips a blackish clot.

"Yes! I had no wish to tell you . . . And wrong I was not . . . for that I am dying now! . . . Thomas Trublet . . . my sister, Anne-Marie . . . is four months gone with child . . . the time elapsed since last you went away. . . . Thomas Trublet . . . on the very body of God, who soon will judge me . . . my sister, Anne-Marie . . . no one has had her but you . . . Yes, save for you, you alone, she was always a good girl. . . . Thomas Trublet, will you marry her?"

At once the eyes glazed again. Vincent Kerdoncuff, this time, was going to die for good and all. Thomas Trublet in all his flesh felt a great uneasiness. Weakened, shattered, dissolved, his will could no longer support him against this dead man's supplications. With a final effort, Vincent Kerdoncuff, his two hands flat against the ground, raised himself toward Thomas Trublet. Heart and bowels torn then by a compassion against which he could no longer struggle, Thomas yielded. Bowing his head in token of consent:

"Yes! Vincent, go you also, in peace," he pronounced. "For if your sister is really as you say, and through me, I shall marry her, I swear it by the Christ of the Ravelin,

and the Virgin of the Grand' Porte. Go in peace, Vincent, if freely you pardon me."

"Amen," the dying man struggled to say.

But in his throat stuck a second black clot, larger than the first, choking him. From neither wound was the blood flowing so freely now. And now it ceased altogether. At the same time, the two arms arched against the ground gave way, and the body, no longer supported, fell back heavily on the pavement. A shudder ran through the four inert limbs. Then, not a stir more.

And Thomas, bare-headed, crossed himself as he began devoutly to recite the few words he knew of prayers for the dead.

An hour later the moon, now riding high, was richly silvering the whole expanse of Mer Bonne. Thomas Trublet, from the top of the rampart overlooking the Vieux Quai, scanned the thick forest of masts there, in search of his new frigate, the *Belle Hermine*, whose anchorage Gaultier Danycan had pointed out to him. And at last he found it.

"*Ça!*" he muttered. "It does appear that I was very wise, in closing with the chevalier a while ago!"

In Thomas Trublet's strong arms the mortal remains of Vincent Kerdoncuff had, without much trouble, passed over the wall of the Three Graveyards. For the moment then the corpse was where corpses should be; and the diverse bushes amongst which Thomas had laid it would hide it for a time. All the same, that time would not last long. It was no more as in other days, and the City Council never failed to make a great rumpus about a man slain, even though honestly, in fair fight. For Thomas Trublet, the slayer, even though in defence of his own body, the case was assuredly none too good.

But out on the brown water where the moon was scattering its sequins of new silver, the four masts of the

*Belle Hermine*, its ten yard-arms upraised like crosses, was swaying, compassionately. And Thomas Trublet, looking at them, smiled.

"Not Sunday," he murmured, "but tomorrow . . . tomorrow, yes, on the evening tide . . . an it pleases my patron saint . . . I shall set sail!"

Whereupon bell Noguette rang out. A late hour. . . . On the strand, uncovered now by the ebb-tide, the watch-dogs of St. Malo gave answer to the bell with prolonged howls. And again Thomas crossed himself, for, thought he, "the dogs are howling to that dead man, Vincent Kerdoncuff."

The dogs, however, having howled their fills, ceased; and Thomas Trublet sighed:

"Ill-fated fellow that he was, God rest his soul!"

For Thomas Trublet, Corsair, was neither cruel, nor hard of heart.

# BOOK II

# THE CORSAIRS

## CHAPTER I

FROM the crow's-nest perched high above the cross-pieces of the topgallant, the lookout man scrutinized the horizon. Then hands to mouth, funnel-wise, he leaned forward, and called out to the deck below:

"Land ho! Three points to larboard! Land!"

As he caught the words on the forecastle, the steersman sprang, axe in hand, to the main-hatch where with all his might he repeated the cry, so that no one on board, whether in galley or on spardeck, could fail to hear the news.

"Land ho! Three points to larboard! Land!"

Whereupon every man took to his legs, rushing to the deck; and many a lad of the crew climbed the shrouds, the better to see.

Sixty days, just, it made since setting sail in Mer Bonne. Sixty days to cover the fifteen hundred great sea-leagues that stretch between the Tortoise and St. Malo—that is nothing at all! A swift-sailing craft, the *Belle Hermine* must have been to do it.

All the more so since Thomas Trublet, duly instructed by his owner and by certain old Malouins, well-practiced in those waters, had been at great pains to take the best course, which was by no means the shortest.

No sooner had he cleared the Brittany isles than he put

his helm hard to southward, skirting the Spanish coast and Portugal, and sighting one after another, the island clusters off the African coast—Madeira, the Fortunees, and the Cape Verde archipelago. Then only, the trade wind now swelling his sails on the right side of the canvas, did he change his tack and set helm on the Americas, sailing due west across the Atlantic, and leaving the detestable Sargossa seas far to northward; and finally, the forty-fifth day, he landed on one of the Windward Islands —which one it matters little to know. Fifteen days more, and the *Belle Hermine*, taking her dose of alternating squalls and dead calms, beat northward the whole length of the Virgin Islands, thence to Porto Rico and San Domingo. The sixtieth day dawned. And the land sighted this time could be none other than the desired Tortoise, object and goal of the long voyage.

The rear door of the poop-castle opened, and Captain Thomas Trublet, with Louis Guénolé, his lieutenant, issued therefrom. Arm in arm they walked the length of the deck, and mounting the starboard ladder, climbed to the forecastle. There each raised a hand to his eyes (the better to see), and looked intently for the land announced. Roundabout the crew stood attentive, ears pricked for orders. Neither Trublet nor Guénolé were of that breed of commanders that their men can ignore.

"That's our island," pronounced Thomas, after a steady scrutiny.

"So it appears to me," said Louis Guénolé. "Such it is as old Kersaint described, he who had spent four years hereabouts."

The object sighted did, indeed, appear to be land, still a great distance away, and barely emerging from the horizon, for it also was blue, and nearly transparent. But those sharp sailor eyes, in spite of the distance, already descried the arched outline of a mountain range, steep on the north, but sloping gently to the southward.

"In these seas," observed Louis Guénolé, "sight can

reach so far that it's a marvel. Devil take me if ever, approaching land in our home waters, the sharpest-eyed mate on board could guess, at this distance, that there was land out yonder."

"*Parguienne!*" approved Thomas Trublet.

Whereupon he grew silent and continued to gaze.

The *Belle Hermine* was sailing large, all sails set save the topgallants that are often difficult to reef quickly enough in regions subject to squalls. Thus rigged, the *Belle Hermine* was making a good eight knots an hour, duly recorded by the log, and the Tortoise began slowly to rise out of the sea.

The bluish land was turning green, a green many-shaded and soft to the sense, such as one finds nowhere in the world save in the Antilles. In this rare and perfect verdure, veritably enchanting the eye, there now appeared little white dots, widely scattered. The mountain was covered with them; and against the soft velvet of woods and meadows, the white dots made a lace of that delicate kind worn by noble lords over the silk of their doublets by way of ornament and gewgaws.

"*Ma Doué!*" said Louis Guénolé then, pointing towards the island, "it strikes me that yonder land is a land of the rich. What we see there can be none else than fine country houses and chateaux, most agreeably situated in healthful air of the hills, and pleasant to inhabit."

"Yes," said Thomas Trublet. "And the town itself lies below, on the very brim of the sea. There it comes in sight now, and the port too, by the same token!"

But a cup-handle it was, a slim semi-circlet running off at the shore, where thirty or forty buildings grouped around it, all of surpassing ugliness and more like warehouses than dwellings. But, on the left, the solid stonework of a battery made a good showing, planned no doubt so that the balls from its great cannon of green bronze should cross the range of a solid gun-turret distinguish-

able on the left. So that, although lying too wide open on the seaside, the port of Tortoise Island had little to fear from hostile attacks which it could so vigourously repulse.

"To our purposes, all this," Thomas pronounced, after his long inspection. "Louis, give orders for casting anchor, and have some of this canvas laid by. I am going back to the cabin for that which you wot of."

Guénolé nodded. "As you command," he replied.

Arm in arm they returned to the poop, and the captain went back to his quarters, while his lieutenant climbed to the taffrail, where manœuvres can best be watched, for from there the eye can take in with one glance the ten yard-arms of all four masts

In his cabin, sitting in front of his captain's coffer, Thomas Trublet, having upraised the heavy double-padlocked lid, was searching in his papers for the most important of them all, the one which in a few hours he counted on presenting to My Lord Ogéron, the Governor. For, at the last news received from Versailles by the Chevalier Danycan, it appeared that in 1666, and even in 1664, the Sieur Ogéron governed the Tortoise and the San Domingan coast for the King, and my lords of the Compagnie Occidentale.

"Save I mistake, here it is," murmured Thomas at last, and unfolded the document, a parchment stamped with green wax, bearing the double tracings of the royal seal. Thomas, though little lettered, knew how to read, and thus he spelled out:

## LETTER OF MARQUE

*Louis de Bourbon, Count of Vermandois, Admiral of France, to all those who may view these presents, Greeting. The orders which we have received from the King to provide for the just defence of his subjects, and the safety of commerce on the high seas. . . .*

He skipped several lines; then:

*For these reasons, we give leave, power and full permission to the Sieur Thomas Trublet, captain of the frigate, the Belle Hermine by name, of one hundred and sixty tons or thereabouts, with such crew, cannon, cannon-balls, powder, lead, and other munitions and supplies as she may require for putting to sea, to attack Pirates, Corsairs, or folk of No Professed Calling, and even the subjects of the United Provinces and other Enemies of the State, and to take them prisoner, and dispose of them, their ships, arms, and other things of which he may make seizure, in whatever place encountered. . . .*

He interrupted his reading to look up for a moment:

"That is well put!" said he.

Again he skipped a paragraph, and read:

*. . . Enjoining said Thomas to hoist no flag but his own —to wit; that of San Malo, blue, bearing a white cross, with quarterings scarlet, bearing the silver ermine,* passante; *enjoining him also to observe and cause to be observed by his crew the ordinances of the navy and the regulations issued by His Majesty in the year of grace,* 1669. . . .

The parchment crackled as it was folded.

"For sure," concluded Thomas, well pleased, "we are Corsairs in good standing."

By the taffrail, Louis Guénolé, standing near the helm, was giving orders:

"Reef the lower sails! Topmen, aloft."

His Breton voice, dry and singsong, carried well, and could be heard even as far as the topgallant.

"Loose anchors!"

The gunners of the watch loosened the cables in their chalks, while the men in the rigging galloped up the footropes of the lower yards.

The gunners of the watch loosened the cables in their chocks, while the men in the rigging galloped up the footropes of the lower yards.

"Aloft! Clew sails! 'Ware loose ends!"

On the *Belle Hermine* every manœuvre was executed with that promptness and precision which are the glory of the royal navy.

"Crew below!"

The sheets now reefed, the topmen slid down the length of the shrouds. Then the master-gunner ran to the ladder of the poop-castle, and with bared head reported:

"Ready to cast anchor, sir!"

To which the lieutenant answered with a nod.

To larboard of the taffrail he stood stretched to his full height, an imperious figure. Neither tall nor heavily built was Louis Guénolé, and his smooth white cheeks and longish black hair were like the cheeks and hair of a girl. But, in spite of his delicate features, his steady glance and piercing eyes, where flames were ever smouldering, divested his young face of all girlish gentleness.

A while later, as the *Belle Hermine* was rounding the east point of the Grand Port, Thomas Trublet joined his lieutenant near the poop-castle. And as they stood side by side, one seemed but a slender boy, the other a heavy bluff warrior. Yet, in truth, the boy was no less redoubtable than his captain, and the men of the forecastle, who obeyed the lad almost as though they feared him, knew in what esteem to hold their lieutenant.

"*Ça!*" said Trublet, "it appears to me that we'll soon reach good anchorage. Louis, tell them to heave the lead!"

The helmsman unwound twelve fathom of plummet. "No bottom!" he sang out.

"Small matter," said Trublet. "There's a brigantine at anchor not far from here. Louis, luff a bit!"

And Louis promptly luffed.

"Reef astern! Soundings astern! Helm to leeward, gently!"

The frigate, obeying, ran closer to land. Soon the

sails flapped empty of wind; and the helmsman, casting his lead hand over hand, sang out:

"Bottom! Ten fathom on larboard side, ten fathom!"

"Clear both anchors!" commanded Thomas Trublet. And, turning to his lieutenant:

"You'd best go forward; we cast anchor in a moment," said he.

For, according to rule, the second officer should be in the bow when the anchor is cast, and the moment for casting had come.

Trublet, standing alone, inspected the trim of the sheets. The frigate now carried none but her topsails, and mizzen, and made but little headway. Trublet spat into the water, the better to judge of it and reached a decision.

"Attention! Clew sails!"

Simultaneously, the three tops'ls fell back like three pairs of wings.

"Reef! strike! Reef starboard and larboard!"

The sheets fell in place, and above the tops, braces and lifts suddenly tautened. Thomas, satisfied, looked at his bare masts. Then, raising his voice, so as to be clearly heard by the gunners clustering round the cables of the bow:

"Stand by to cast anchor; starboard! . . . Cast anchor starboard!"

Whereupon the anchor plunged, amid a great noise of splashing waters.

A moment later the helmsman on duty called to Thomas Trublet:

"Captain! *hé!* Captain! The brigantine lying-to there, she's sending the like of a skiff this way!"

## CHAPTER II

O! Boat ahoy!"

The watch, spike in hand, uttered the regulation "Ahoy" as the skiff approached. But from the craft, a four-oared longboat, there came no reply. A figure stood up in the boat however, and by way of peaceable signal, began to wave a leathern hat, its ribbons streaming in the breeze.

And now the boat was already scraping the frigate's side. The man of the hat called out, "Hollo! . . . Send down a rope!"

A hoarse voice and foreign. The crew from their posts looked at their captain, standing on the taffrail ladder. Thomas gave a nod, and while the sailors, prompt to obey, were lowering the rope asked for, he climbed down to the deck, and stood at the gangway to receive his visitor. The latter, grasping the cordage end, scrambled up the length of it, quick as a monkey. As he sprang aboard Thomas approached and, cordial as becomes one welcoming a stranger, held out his hand, not neglecting, however, to keep his left palm on the butt of one of the pistols stuck in his belt.

"Hurrah!" cried the stranger.

He too wore a brace of pistols, and these he grasped by their butt end, first the one and then the other, offering them to Thomas in token of friendship and alliance. Then, "Hurrah!" he cried once more. Whereupon explanations.

Edward Bonny, known as Redbeard—for through a barbarous, indeed savage-like vanity much resembling

that of certain Redskins who paint their bodies, he had stained his beard a vivid crimson—was captain in his own right of the brigantine at anchor in the waters where the *Belle Hermine* had come to anchor. The brigantine, a slight enough craft known as the *Flying King*, carried eight small guns. But to this weakness Redbeard gave small heed, being wont to say to his crew that it was with but four guns and twenty-eight Filibusters that the celebrated Pierre Legrand some fifty years earlier had boarded and seized the galleon of the vice-admiral of the Spanish fleet—a ship with a crew of 396 men, and fifty-four artillery pieces, nearly every one of them cast in bronze. The more numerous the enemy, the larger the booty; in short, "the fewer the lads of the crew the richer each share." Such were the maxims of Edward Bonny, native of Bristol, England. To these he added one other: that, as a man dies but once, and lives but once, he must be a dullard, indeed, who fails to live a merry life for fear of an ill death.

Tall, and heavily built, though far from approaching Thomas Trublet's vast girth, he was surpassed by no one in courage, resolution, and fierce pride. And from the twenty battles he had already fought, on land and sea, all the Americas had learned what manner of man was this Edward Bonny.

Thomas Trublet had, naturally, no inkling of these events. Nevertheless, he did not mistake his man and promptly esteemed the Filibuster at his full value. In the visitor's honour, the oldest wine of the storeroom was brought up and served, freshly-drawn, in the largest tankards of the *Belle Hermine's* cupboards. Not a quarter of an hour had passed before the two captains were fast friends, and in token thereof giving one another resounding smacks on the buttocks.

"Hollo!" said Edward Bonny at last, fixing his sharp eyes, as black as his beard was red, on Thomas Trublet, "Hollo! old pal, a fellow like you, with a beard like that

of yours there, never came to these parts in search of cocoa, tobacco, or Campeachy wood, save when such supplies are to be had for the picking off the Spaniards just setting sail from New Spain. Do I mistake? May the Grand Cric crunch me alive, if your name's not Corsair, as mine is Filibuster! And such folk as we were made to understand one another, and belike cruise together. Your hand here, mate, and I'll teach you a stroke that'll make us rich, and that we'll try together, good Coast Brothers that we be!"

"Of a truth!" replied Thomas, wisely. "Mate, my boy, that suits me! But what's this of Spaniards and New Spain? *Pardieu,* yes, Corsair I am, and ready to take a run with you, our ships supporting one another as consorts; but only against the Hollanders, who are enemies of the King of France, and not at all against other folk, neutrals, allies, or friends. In proof whereof, here is my letter of marque. Pirate I'd be, truly, if I failed its commands. Read the parchment."

"Hollo!" cried Redbeard. "Do you think that I can read? Not I! But, what matter? Hollanders, Spaniards, worm-eaten Papists, and filthy bastards, between sheep's wool, and bull's hide, where the difference? You're mad, matey! And are you, of all the French and English here, going to be the only one to turn tail on that monkey crew from Castille, that, without mercy or truce, is forever burning our houses, hanging our men—every time, that is, we fail to do the hanging and burning first? By their accursed *Mère de Dieu!* Thomas Trublet, Malouin and captain that you are, you're either for us or against us. If for us, your hand, here! If against us, the Grand Cric eat me alive! I'm off to my ship and it's a fight to the death we'll have and presently!"

Thomas took a step back, but did not answer. Redbeard, after this bluster, began again, less roughly:

"What now? Is it this rag from a donkey's hide that's

troubling you? Come, mate, when you've lived among us awhile, you'll not be bothering your head any more about the friends and enemies of your goodman King. Your own friends and enemies will suffice. But run free meanwhile! For the present there's no harm. Monsieur d'Ogéron, the Governor, is a clever man, and I doubt not he will know how to find you another letter of marque, better than this one, and one commanding you to attack the Spanish as well as the Dutch. If I speak truth, are you with me?"

Thomas gave him a long look, taking his measure and gauging him:

"Yes," said he; then in his ringing, decided voice: "With Monsieur Ogéron's license, whom I wish to-day to visit, I'll go with you willingly. But what is this arrangement of which you speak, and what letter of marque can they give me beyond this one?"

Edward Bonny burst into a resounding laugh, then plunged into detailed explanations.

Not in those days alone had the inextinguishable war raging between the Filibusters and the Spanish colonies of the New Indies arisen. A long while before—fifty years, or more mayhap, no one was left to remember, exactly—the *Boucaniers*, or hunters of wild bulls, themselves were hunted and right cruelly on their own hunting grounds by the Spaniards. Taking vengeance by attacking in turn, they wrought frightful butchery. At this time, which came long before the period of real Filibustering, the Buccaneers, rustic folk, and simple-minded, being driven to warfare by brutal aggression, had at first bothered no more about diplomacy than about politics. Little did they care whether their enemies were those of His Most Catholic Majesty or not. They scarcely knew that they themselves were subjects of the Most Christian King. When they were molested, they gave blow for blow! "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. When you strike, I kill!" What did the rest matter?

Nevertheless, things changed somewhat. Having fought long years on land and sea, and growing accustomed to meeting the same enemy—the Spaniard—at every turn, the Filibusters, heirs and successors to the Buccaneers, had on sundry occasions, solicited and obtained the aid of those diverse nations of Europe, who became successively the enemies of Spain, Portugese, Dutch, and English, in turn, and especially, almost always in fact, the French, who for many years had been fighting their Spanish neighbors. Besides, the Filibusters still remembered that they had themselves, most of them, been French before being of their present condition. There were even some of them who counted on returning —when they had made their fortunes—to their former motherland. And thus it came about that after numerous adventures of one sort and another, they resolved to ask that a French Governor be appointed for that favorite lair of theirs, Tortuga. And this they besought of Monsieur le Chevalier de Poincy, then ruling in the island of St. Christopher as General in the name of the Order of Malta.

Filibustering then had reached this point in its career at the time of Thomas Trublet's arrival at La Tortue. Less independent than of yore, and even, nominally at least, subject to the commands of the French King, it yet preserved much real independence, and many of its original rights. Of these the most precious was by all odds that of carrying on warfare at all times against its own enemies even after they had ceased being the enemies of the King of France, a right upheld by a peace treaty that had been signed somewhere in Europe.

In cases of this sort, however, it was for the Governor to find such basis for the Filibusters' acts as would clothe them with a semblance of regularity. The Sieur d'Ogéron, following numerous predecessors, had perfected many methods of procedure already very ingenious. One high in his favour, and of great usefulness in this year, 1672,

was that of giving to the Corsairs letters of marque bearing the signature of His Majesty, the King of Portugal —quite authentic letters they were too, and he possessed an inexhaustible supply of them, though by what means obtained it would have been hard to say.

"Thus will he do for you, Thomas Trublet," said the English Filibuster Redbeard, concluding his discourse. "Have no doubts on that score, and go to see him as soon as may be. By way of beginning, salute him with the seven salvos that are his due. As for me, I'm off to my *Flying King*, and agree herewith to set out with you tomorrow at sunrise. Why waste time? A day will suffice you to lay in water, and victuals, for our journey will take no more than a fortnight."

As the long-boat from the English ship shoved off from the *Belle Hermine's* flank, the first salvo thundered across the bay. Edward Bonny, at the tiller, joyfully shook his red beard. Not much time did it take that damn Malouin to load and fire a cannon!

Thomas Trublet meanwhile, and Louis Guénolé beside him, were looking landward. Already the folk of the town were running out of their houses and gathering on the shore, to see what manner of ship this might be, thus saluting their Governor. And now a man more richly dressed than the others, and wearing a plumed hat, left the crowd and came down the beach, to the water's edge. As the last shot rang out, he bared his head in greeting. And the crew of the *Belle Hermine* did not for a moment doubt that this personage was the Sieur d'Ogéron, as such indeed he was—Governor in the name of the King and the West India Company, of the Ile de la Tortue, and the Dominican coast.

## CHAPTER III

"NOW you then," Captain Edward Bonny was saying to Thomas Trublet, and his lieutenant Louis Guénolé, "that less than four hundred marine leagues west-southwest of here, beyond the windward passage and the island of Jamaica, there is a gulf in a great spread of land. All dotted with islands it is, and known as the Gulf of Honduras. Not far from there is the region known as Campeachy, which forms a part of the rich kingdom of New Spain. Full of gold, and silver it is, and cochineal, precious woods, excellent tobacco, and that cocoa of which they make chocolate, a salutary beverage. Chief among its flourishing cities and well-fortified ports is Vera Cruz. (In spite of its fortifications, however, eleven years after Redbeard thus described it, Vera Cruz was taken by assault and pillaged by the Filibusters in 1683.) And certainly, it would be a hard and perilous adventure, with but two ships between us, and barely sixty men, to attack any one of these ports. Nevertheless, this is what I would propose to you, for lack of a better enterprise, and I know well enough that you would accept it, like the men you are, worthy of being numbered among the Filibusters. But, thanks be to God, there is no need of running such risks in order to enrich ourselves properly! Listen to me now, both of you! In the very heart of this curving gulf, a river empties out that we Adventurers call the Rivière des Moustiques. Now, in this river, which is easily navigable,

the Spaniards yearly equip and arm a *hourque* of seven or eight hundred tons, for use as a transport, and a *patache*, to protect her, and carry in her own hold the more precious and less cumbersome merchandise, that could not well be placed on the *hourque*, such as metals for striking into coin. You know, doubtless, that a *hourque* is a large ship with rounded prow and stern, often well-armed—when it needs to be—and that a *patache* is merely a manner of coast-guard frigate. Now as to this matter we speak of, I am informed that the *hourque* from Honduras carries fifty-six cannon, and the *patache* only forty, but of the largest calibre. Ninety-six pieces in all, against which we have twenty-eight. The contest—that is to say, will be even. It will have odds in our favour if, as I hope, we can capture the *hourque* first and then the frigate, attacking each separately, with our two ships. Such is my plan."

"We favour it," answered Thomas Trublet without a moment's hesitation, speaking for himself and for Louis Guénolé.

Whereupon Redbeard, leaving the *Belle Hermine*, returned to his *Flying King*, and the two ships, consorts now, set sail from the Tortoise.

They were by this lying at anchor in the lee of Roatan island, one of the Bahias, to take on water and also to keep watch for the *patache* and the *hourque* which could not fail to emerge from the river mouth, and take their bearings from Roatan before sailing northward to round Cape Catoche, for such is the best course to Europe. Thomas and Louis, alone in the main cabin, were ending their noon repast of salted meat—tough it was too—dried beans, or *favots* as the sailors call them, and hard-tack, tougher still than the meat. Having ended his meal, Thomas, good Catholic that he was, intoned the chant of Zachary, which he followed with the *Magnificat*. And Louis, after joining in the chorus, then recited the *Miserere*. This they did, as was custom on board all

Christian Corsairs, to sanctify each meal. And having thus prayed together, they looked upon one another in friendly fashion.

"A good practice, that," said the Captain. "With these songs in our throats, like to those they sing at church, home seems less far away."

"Yes," Louis Guénolé agreed.

He said not a word more, but sat wrinkling his forehead.

"What now?" asked Trublet, watching him.

"Nothing."

"Of a truth! . . . I say there is something troubling you."

"Nothing, I tell you!"

"Yes! and, *sangbleu!* it strikes me a secret is not fair play between us two!"

"Well then," said Guénolé, "since you take it thus, I'll speak. Be angry if you choose at what I have to say. This is what's troubling me. This enterprise of ours has no very Catholic color to my eye, Thomas Trublet, but hear me out . . . and having listened, think well, before replying! We two, good and true Christians, as we are, what, I ask you, are we doing here in the company of yonder Englishman, who's a heretic by all odds, and a Huguenot, if no worse? And so allied we are going to pursue and fight the Spanish, good true Christians like ourselves, and subjects of a King, who, for the present at least, is the friend of our own King! Is that a good enterprise, think you? Who besides are the usual enemies of us Malouins? Who are those who have sworn, if ever they take our city, to leave not a stone standing, and to have vengeance for all the defeats they have suffered every time they have attacked us? Well you know, my Thomas! They are the English, not the Spaniards! And since you exact this of me, I tell you frankly: I am ill-pleased to see this English ship that's athwart us here become our friend."

"Patience!" said Thomas Trublet.

He had poured out for his lieutenant and for himself two full bowls of that cane sugar rhum that is sold in all the Americas, and of which he had found good provision at La Tortue.

"Patience!" he repeated. "And first, drink that up!"

He emptied his own bowl.

"*Mon Louis*," he began thereupon, "you do not make me angry, and I think as do you. The English, you say? Do you believe I bear them more love than you do yourself? Their turn will come, rest assured, to serve as targets for our guns. But at present what duty have we, save, above all, to make our bourgeois rich, and ourselves to boot? Our present expedition will take care of that. What matter that some folk be Huguenots, and some Catholics, some neutrals, and some friends, provided we have letters of marque against them all, made out in good and due form? By my faith, let come what will! And may what comes be the blessed day which shall find us bourgeois in our turn, and owners of our ships, free to do with them as we like, and fight whom we please!"

At once he filled the bowls again. But Louis Guénolé did not drink. "What is it now?" Trublet asked again. "Speak, comrade, pour out what lies heavy on your heart!"

Then said the lieutenant, lowering his voice:

"Thomas"—he cast a hesitating, an anxious look even to right and left—"Thomas, you speak well and bravely. But are you mindful that the Cunning One knows well how to spread for us gilded springes? And this, is it not such a springe? St. Anne d'Auray! Hear me, my Thomas."

He lowered his voice yet more; and Thomas brusquely straightened, his own eyes anxious now, and with both hands he fingered the blessed medals that hung from his neck.

"Listen to me, my Thomas. When I was but a shaver,

my mother took me to the pardon of Plouguenast. Twelve long years agone that was, in the autumn, and I remember how already the air was growing dark. Plouguenast, if you know it, is high on the mountain and deep in the woods. There are rivers there, a-plenty. But they can scarce be seen, so narrow are they, squeezed between the oaks of the banks, and the fern that grows at the feet of the great trees, and the moss below the thick fern. All this I mention so you can understand what those rivers are like. Well might one fall into one of them without suspecting that a stream was flowing there!

"Well, my mother was pulling me along by the arm, all the length of a rough path, in the very depth of the wood. And it isn't the Korrigans that are lacking in that forest . . . but I felt no fear, not a bit of fear, my word on it . . . not so much fear as now, Thomas, to speak truth . . . and all this because of my mother, who was a fine woman. Hanging on to the end of her arm, I would have walked into the very middle of a witches' ring, St. Yves and St. Louis forgive me!

"But . . . hark a moment! Suddenly my mother stops short and doesn't move, changed, as our priest would say, into a pillar of salt. I look, and see that she is listening. I listen too and I hear . . . plouf! plouf! plouf! . . . Yes. The sound of wet clothes slapping against the washboards."

Thomas with a jerk crossed himself.

"The Washingwomen of the Streams?" he asked, his cheeks blanching.

"Eh!" said Guénolé. "Did I know anything about them, in those days? The Washingwomen it was, though! And this is how I learned that it was they: the next moment my mother let go my hand, and took a step forward, one, two, three, as though to see as far as she could. Then she jumped back, caught me by the hand, and ran as fast as ever woman ran that had a child to drag after her. Away we rushed from the place where we were going,

not daring to proceed further, not daring either to look back, even once. And the rest followed as it must."

"She died within the year?" asked Trublet.

"Within the month," said Guénolé. "You see it really was they, busy no doubt washing her winding sheet by moonlight. And now, let me tell you this, for your remembering, Thomas Trublet, captain as you are! I was but a ship's boy then, the least knowing probably, on our street. Just the same, when I heard that plouf! plouf! plouf! of the Washingwomen, I remember feeling, clear as a torch . . . here, between my shoulders, and gliding down to the end of my spine, a freezing cold that gripped my marrow, and twisted my entrails, a cold such as makes the frosts of winter seem warm as coals in comparison . . . yes! Now, the other morning, the day we arrived at the Tortoise, the moment I laid eyes on Bonny Redbeard, whom God and the Saints confound! . . . and every time since that accursed morning, that this same Bonny Redbeard fellow has set foot on our deck . . . well, clear as a torch I tell you, I felt the same frightful cold, that I have never forgotten since that night when I heard the Washingwomen—the cold of mortal sin and death, the cold of a soul in pain of damnation. Thomas! Thomas! Great misfortune will come out of all of this!"

Once more Thomas Trublet crossed himself, and yet again; and he sat pondering.

"Bah!" said he at last. "Let come what will! There's surely a big difference between the Washingwomen, terrible though they are, as every man knows, for no one has yet seen one of them without dying for it, and this Redbeard you speak of, who's of flesh and blood, and who sees many folk daily without any one of them being the worse."

"Who knows?" said Louis Guénolé. "Supposing he did bring bad luck, and sowed the seed of maledictions wherever he goes; that seed would not germinate right away,"

"Louis," said Thomas, "you are a devout lad, and for that I love you. But here, we are not as at home. Save on our moorlands, where sorcerers, and werewolf shepherds are ever wandering, no one has ever found anywhere people of ill-omen living like other men; still less in the form of honest Corsair captains, with ships, and cannon, and crews, and coming, mark you, to seek succour and alliance for enterprises too great for their powers."

"So be it!" said Louis Guénolé. "God grant I am wrong, and may the Redbeard bring us nothing but pieces of eight, by the dozen gross."

As he spoke, a shot, distant and muffled, shook, ever so slightly, the *Belle Hermine's* keel. Captain and lieutenant made quick work of getting on deck. For a single shot was the signal, agreed upon between them and Redbeard, which should announce the appearance at the river mouth, of *patache* or *hourque*.

In the rigging, the sailors were already climbing to the shrouds, each eager to be the first to sight the still invisible enemy. But Thomas Trublet soon checked this incipient disorder by one single command roared out with the full strength of his great lungs:

"Clear decks for action!"

## CHAPTER IV

IT wasn't much of a fight, nor at any time hotly contested. True, the *hourque* and the *patache* between them had three times the number of cannon that the *Belle Hermine* and the *Flying King* could muster together. And, even separately, each of them was still far superior to the two Corsairs united. But there's fighting and fighting. The Spaniards, peaceable folk, burghers, merchants, or merchant-mariners, had small knowledge of warfare, and depended on the contingent of soldiers embarked with them. Of these latter there were not many. Moreover, the heaving deck of a ship was less familiar to them than the solid ground on which they had learnt their trade. To this the aim of their cannon bore witness. That of the Corsairs on the other hand was accurate beyond an admiral's dream. The *hourque*, rudely raked by the cross-fire of two adversaries, surrendered in no time. The *patache*, at this juncture, was for escaping to the open. But the *Belle Hermine*, trimmed for speed, overtook her while the *Flying King* was manning her prize. And then it was that Trublet's crew first learned to estimate their captain's skill at its true worth. Thomas, carefully keeping under the Spaniard's stern, caught none but her rear shots; then luffing, and bearing down on her, he riddled her with two broadsides. Caught in this wise, and fearful of imitating the Corsair's manœuvre, lest he should grapple her, the *patache* quickly resigned herself to her fate. Scarce twenty

minutes had passed when the flag of Castille and Leon came tumbling in great haste from her poop. The *Belle Hermine* then came alongside the surrendered enemy, and boarded her bow to bow, out of extreme precaution. Thomas, leaping on the bridge of the capture, duly received the sword of the vanquished captain; on the deck fifty or sixty bodies lay scattered about, and entrails littered the gangways.

The victors then proceeded to the division of the booty.

On board the *hourque*, the captors found that their winnings consisted of twenty thousand reams of paper, and a quantity of linen, serge, cloth, ribbons, and other stuffs, all worth money. But the Corsairs could scarce derive any profit therefrom. Those on the *Flying King* without further ado threw into the sea everything they had just won at the cost of good red blood, for several of them were wounded, and some dead. The *patache*, on the other hand, was laden with pure silver, hammered into bars. And while there was not as much of this in the hold as had been expected, the prize was a better one than the *hourque*, and far easier to turn to profit.

But among the Malouin crew dispute was arising; the English too, some of the men contended, should have their share of the silver ingots, for the *Flying King* and her captain had been parties to the hunting compact. The others, arguing that the *Belle Hermine* had alone attacked and taken the *patache*, denied that the *Flying King* should have any share save in what was found on the *hourque*, the latter having surrendered to the united efforts of both Corsairs.

From argument to argument, the dispute grew quarrelsome, and might have become worse. Threats began to fly. Thomas Trublet and Louis Guénolé meantime were both on board the *patache*, busying themselves with setting the prize in good order, and locking up the prisoners in a safe place.

Suddenly, at the moment when they least expected it,

a pistol shot rang out on the deck of the *Belle Hermine*. Louis Guénolé, who was attending to the secure closing of the hatch below which the horde of those Spaniards who were still sound and whole had been thrust, raised his head and stood listening. Thomas Trublet, quicker to act, rushed from the hold where he was calculating the exact worth of the silver his prize carried, and scrambled from ladder to ladder to the forecastle of the *patache*, in order to see, at one glance, what was taking place on his frigate.

And see he did: divided into two camps, his crew was about to begin a hand-to-hand tussle. The man who had fired—narrowly missing a comrade—stood in the middle of the deck, his still smoking weapon at his feet, where he had thrown it down to have a free hand for his sword.

"*Hola!*" cried Thomas Trublet.

Bounding from forecastle to bowsprit, from bowsprit to spritsail, and swinging himself up by the help of a lift that had been cut in two by a bullet, he leapt from rigging to rigging and in less than four seconds was on board his own ship, and in the very midst of the tumult. And good need he had of being thus skilful on the ropes, for the two ships, still bound together by a few grappling hooks, though floating close to one another, were not exactly alongside. The crew therefore, seeing its captain suddenly much nearer at hand than it might have wished, stood, every man of it, stock-still with amazement and as if turned to stone. The fellow with the pistol, who had been shouting and gesticulating a moment before, was the very first to drop his arm, and stand silent, though his mouth remained open.

"What's this?" demanded Thomas, and he was white with cold anger. Nevertheless, he contained himself. In the three months and more that had elapsed since the *Belle Hermine* had set sail from Mer Bonne up to the time of the fight just ended, not a sign of mutiny had there been on board. As a result the men, although they knew

their Trublet, and divined that he would be severe enough to punish when there was need, had never until that day experienced his severity. Expecting the worst, therefore, they were about to take comfort at seeing him so calm; he had not even raised his voice.

"What's this?" repeated Thomas Trublet, in the same measured tone.

One of the crew, reassured by this calmness, ventured a step forward to explain matters. The fellow was of those who wanted to share the whole of the prize with the English. The man with the pistol was of the opposite camp, and listening to the explanations being offered by the first spokesman, he too pressed forward without a thought to putting up his naked sabre, and began to offer his own contrary views.

Thomas Trublet, listening with both ears, gave small sign of displeasure. He vouchsafed no answer, however, to either one of the disputants. And both of them, dismayed by this silence, began first to stammer and then grew silent.

Then Trublet, with a look at them, inquired,

"Is that all you have to say?"

They nodded "yes"; and more and more uneasy they grew—not without cause.

Not without cause! For Thomas, without taking a single step to right or left, had placed a hand on each butt end of the brace of pistols in his belt. And suddenly, pulling them out at a stroke, and extending both arms simultaneously in opposite directions, he shot twice, so rapidly that it sounded like one shot, and with so accurate an aim that both men, their heads shattered in like manner, fell in the same instant.

Then Thomas Trublet, arms crossed, stepped back to the barricading, and faced his crew. No one save himself had moved, and it was with blank terror they looked at him.

"Boys!" he cried. "I have killed two of you. I'll kill

twenty or forty more at need. But understand this well. While I live, there's no room for mutineers on this ship. Those who fail me will have my pistol to reckon with. To your posts, every man of you! And as to the sharing of the booty, I alone am the master of that, and shall do as I please."

The two bodies lay bleeding before their mates.

"As to these carcasses," said Thomas, pointing to them, "let them be hoisted to the yard-arm and hung by the neck. Thus every man shall know my justice, for it is both high, and low, and above all speedy. Obey orders!"

The men were not slow to move.

Thomas Trublet, alone on the bridge, raised his eyes to view that which he called his justice. And it was thus that Louis Guénolé found him when he returned from his inspection of the prize, now duly made fast alongside.

Thomas's anger was like those slow rivers which rise little by little, almost imperceptibly, but whose waters flood the land over a far wider extent, and for a longer time than those of impetuous torrents. Thomas Trublet's anger, on this occasion, was still growing and swelling, even after all shadow of mutiny had vanished. Thinking he was acting for the best, Louis Guénolé, drawing near, greeted his captain with the words:

"Surely, you did well!"

"Hold your tongue!" replied Thomas, with a savage roar.

Scarce daring to breathe, the lieutenant stood facing his captain.

A long time it took, indeed, for Thomas to master his rage sufficiently to be able to speak.

"What think you?" said he to Louis. "Wouldn't I have done better to hang a dozen of the curs?"

"Eh?" said Louis. "We have but a hundred in all! Moreover, they fought bravely today, and merit some

indulgence. Besides, 'twas not against you they mutinied!"

"*Sangdieu!*" cried Thomas, "if it should ever be otherwise, I'll put a match to the magazine!"

"Very well!" approved Guénolé, calmly. "And now what is your will, as to the sharing of the prize? Here comes the Filibuster now, helm hard on us."

And between his teeth he added:

"Didn't I say that this cursed dog would bring us ill-luck?" and crossed himself. Thomas meanwhile stood pondering the problem.

"As to the sharing of the prize," said he, "here's the answer. It belongs to us and no one else, for we alone won it. But, on the other hand, Redbeard was our pilot in this matter, and should have his reward. This, therefore, shall I do. One third of the ingots will be for our bourgeois, and one-third for the provisioner, deducting all that we spent in the Tortoise and elsewhere. The remaining third is for us and our men. I'll keep but your share and mine, Louis, and shall give the rest to the Englishman, and the hull of the *patache* besides, as a reward for him and punishment for our men, who'll see from this what comes of rebellion. If they want to grow rich, they'll have to fight again."

And thus was it done, as Thomas Trublet had decreed. Not a man on the *Belle Hermine* dared so much as murmur against a decision which, on the other ship, caused great astonishment. Edward Bonny, well-pleased with the share allotted to him, was loud in his praises of the Malouins, and above all of their chief. Right soon, indeed, did the whole length and breadth of Filibusterdom know of Redbeard's approval and the causes thereof; and on that very day began Thomas Trublet's fame, destined soon to spread throughout the Antilles.

## CHAPTER V

NOW, in that one year of 1672, the *Belle Hermine*, cruising hither and yon among the West Indies, took possession, to her great profit, of four Dutch merchantmen — to wit, the *Krokodil*, laden with cacao, captured off the coast of Curacao; the *Mosa*, with a rich cargo of laces and other manufactures, seized on her return from the Low Countries; the *Draak*, making for Rotterdam when Thomas Trublet encountered it no great distance from Porto Rico; and the *Marten Harpetszoon Tromp*, which was forced to strike its colors less than one league from the isle of Oruba, where certainly it would have found succour, for this island belongs to the United Provinces. All things considered, it must be admitted that on these last two, the booty was of small value. But the *Belle Hermine* had better fortune in the capture of five Spanish ships—to wit, the *Ciudad de Cadiz*, full to the chocks of tobacco and grey amber, which had set sail three days before from San Francisco de Campeachy, and was heading for the Florida canal; the *Dorado*, no more than a longish barque, but richly laden with cochineal, a merchandise of great price, with but a feeble crew to guard it; the *Grazia de Dios*, which had set out from Malaga, Spain, well provided with Andalusian wines, and all manner of stuffs for St. Christophe de la Havane; the *Espada*, cargoed with dyewoods, and also a small quantity of silver, from the mines of Mexico; and, reserving the best for the last, the *Armadilla*, a

frigate carrying twenty-four pieces of cannon, for the protection, as they lay at anchor in the Rivière de la Hache, of fourteen pearl-fishing barques, which Thomas Trublet likewise seized. Rich, indeed, are the pearl fisheries in that place that the Spaniards exploit by means of Indian-slave divers, transporting the pearls thence to Carthagena of the Indies. Yearly are these pearl grounds worked, from October to March, for, in the winter season, the winds and ocean currents are less strong on that part of the coast. That is why Thomas Trublet took good care to attack the *Armadilla* in February, at the end of the fisheries. And a harvest of pearls he won too by this calculation, several bushels of small ones, and large ones also, though in less quantity, but enough to make a rich fortune. When, after this capture, the *Belle Hermine* came to anchor once more at La Tortue, many were those amazed by the recital of their exploits. Monsieur d'Ogéron, the Governor, chief among them. Yet he too found his profit in Thomas's diligence, for, having furnished to the *Belle Hermine* one of its two letters of marque, he received his just share of the booty. No one more than he deserved it, besides, for he was a man of character, loving honest folk, and ever doing them a good turn, and so far as in him lay, never letting them lack for anything. The lads of the St. Malo frigate had ever cause to praise him, on all occasions.

The years following, 1673, 1674, 1675, were no less fruitful. Little by little all the armourers of Spain and the Provinces learned of the *Belle Hermine* and her captain. And now, wherever folk took interest in American commerce, or aught that concerned the West Indies, the report was current that of late, beside the Filibusters, there were other Corsairs, more baneful still, come from St. Malo, and covering all the waters of the Antilles, from Vera Cruz to Maracaibo, and from the Windward Islands to Honduras, in such wise that no merchant ship would henceforth dare to venture out on the salt water. As a

matter of fact, these Corsairs, of whom, fear contributing thereto, each enemy captain thought to see dozens and more, could all be summed up in the one Thomas Trublet. This Thomas, truth to tell, knew better than anyone how to run at all times in those waters where corsairing was of most profit, and though he had but one frigate, diligently accomplished the work of several. Thus he did his best to justify both the terror of his adversaries, and the confidence of his bourgeois, the Chevalier Danycan —a confidence which the latter, wise in this as in other matters, continued to bestow.

Several times, in the course of these four years, the occasion had presented itself of returning to St. Malo, and moreover, returning rich. Yet Thomas Trublet had never wished to profit by such opportunities. Not that he was actually, because of the venturesome life he led, possessed by the great passion that the Adventurers of Filibustering feel for this manner of living, finding themselves unable to renounce it, having once tasted of the sea, and of combats and pillage, but continuing to chase and harry merchantmen, through good fortune and bad, to the very moment of death. Thomas Trublet was not yet of their breed, though as brave as any of them, and a better warrior than any to be found in their number. Malouin in this respect, he was a Malouin too in other matters, and dreamed of a different end from that which ordinarily awaits the best of Filibusters—to wit, a violent death by fire, sword, or rope-end at the hands of the enemy. Thomas, on the contrary, desired for himself, his lieutenant, and all his men, the gentle death of folk who draw their last breath in their own beds, in sheets of well-spun linen, surrounded by an agreeably disconsolate family, desiring also that this occasion might occur as late as possible, and that before its arrival he and his might have the time to enjoy at ease the riches they had courageously and legitimately amassed.

And yet, although this desire accorded very well with

brief returns to the distant homeland, there to unload on the good quay of Mer Bonne the merchandise won in war, and to spin the heavy pieces of eight taken from the galleons of Spain on the tables of the gay cabarets of St. Malo, Thomas Trublet had never come back; never; four years now had this long cruise lasted. Ten times already had the *Belle Hermine*, her hull soiled and weighted down with barnacle growths accumulated during interminable wanderings, been laid up for scraping and repairs. This required a trip to the Cayes du Sud, these Cayes being small isles off the Cuban coast, whither, under the very noses of the Spanish, who cannot see very far, the frigates of the Filibusters are wont to proceed for their minor repairs, since it is the best place for such purposes in the Antilles, the sea there never being rolling or choppy. And always, after each careening, the *Belle Hermine* had started off on new expeditions, of which many a one bore rich harvests.

Meanwhile, the field of the Corsairs' rovings had widened much; the King had taken it upon himself to fight not only Holland, but, nation after nation, nearly the whole of Europe. Spain he had fought since the end of 1672; soon thereafter it was Denmark; then the electorate of Brandenburg; and finally, the Empire. Henceforth, any ship sighted, unless it flew the pavillon of France or England, could be none other than an enemy. And Thomas found it convenient and profitable to give chase to every sail descried, without troubling to turn the glasses on it, and weary his eyes searching out the colour and pattern of its bunting. Corsairing only gained thereby, and grew all the easier. And even the most impatient of his comrades, and those most eager to return, admitted among themselves that there was substantial reason for prolonging a cruise when it brought ever greater riches.

Thomas, besides, was as shrewd as he was valiant. And

though he had not, even after taking his greatest prizes, interrupted his cruisings to scud homeward, none of those with a stake in his adventure, whether armourer, provisioner, or Corsair crew, had in the slightest degree suffered by it. The Filibusters, for lack of patience and care, often lose the rewards of a brilliant enterprise. Their laziness, the disinclination they feel for ever doing one another a good turn, are of this the chief cause. And their habitual prodigality stands also in their way. When they have brought their merchandise to some country or other, the inhabitants take good care not to give them what it is worth, and the Adventurers, as much through need as heedlessness, accept the lowest price, or else, in a fury, throw their cargoes overboard into the sea. Thomas, a better financier, always derived profit from all his prizes. Never being pressed for money, and always maintaining the most exact and rigid discipline among his crew, he could refuse insufficient offers, and sell his booty at a high price. The transaction ended, Monsieur d'Ogéron, ever graciously obliging, gave him bills of exchange payable in France; and in this fashion, the Chevalier Danycan, without stirring from St. Malo, could at his leisure enjoy his share in the prizes, and testify, documents in hand, to the success of his frigate, and to the excellence of the idea he had had in appointing Thomas Trublet to be its captain.

Now, in the year of grace 1676, the *Belle Hermine* was cruising one summer's evening in the open, seeking adventure. And as the weather was fair, the sea calm with a light breeze blowing, Captain Thomas Trublet, and his lieutenant Louis Guénolé, were both resting in the captain's cabin in the poop-castle.

Through the port-holes of the stern-frame, wide open to the twilight breeze, crept the last rays of the sinking sun. Fine weather! The sky, dappled with clouds, each one a little reddening island floating in the blue, reflected

the fiery blaze of the sunset, and on the sea, that had caught fire too from the sun, as it slowly sank, ran little waves dancing wildly as flames about the frigate.

"*Ça!*" said Thomas Trublet, looking through a port-hole. "*Ça!* There's a sight rare to Malouin eyes, no matter what the season, even from the highest ramparts of our city!"

For he liked to talk of his homeland; but, perversely, as though to justify his obstinacy in not returning to it, was pleased to take every opportunity to set above his own country that he so dearly loved, the beauties of the diverse regions whereto his cruisings led him.

"It is true," said Louis Guénolé, in reply, "it is true that with us, sunsets are less gaudy. Moreover, I think that the weather today at St. Malo is, doubtless, far less clement than it is in this region. Nevertheless, to my mind, better rain on home soil than sunshine in a strange land."

Though he had never permitted himself, doubtless through cheerful spirit and respect for discipline, to question his captain's will, Louis Guénolé, Breton that he was, often enough tasted the bitterness of such long absence from his Brittany. The mere thought of the mist-drenched heath, or of the drizzling fogs afloat over the heather and the gorse, brought a twinge of anguish to his heart.

And thus, talking that day of the Breton rain, so unceasingly regretted, Louis Guénolé could not hold back two tears that ran down his cheeks. To hide them from Thomas's sharp glance, he leaned his arm on the socket of the nearest port-hole, feigning to be absorbed in gazing at sea and sky. But, nevertheless, Thomas had seen that the lad was weeping.

"Louis!" cried he suddenly, "Louis, come away from there!"

Louis, his eyes dried now by the evening breeze, turned with a smile toward his captain.

"*Pardienne!*" continued Thomas. "I have no wish to be a bad fellow. What's to be done then? Louis, I love you much. For me, and for every one of us, and for our whole enterprise, you have been, four full years long, the bravest and most trusty of lieutenants. Not for three shares of our finest prize would I have a single thought of sadness in your heart, or anger, save against the enemies of our King and of St. Malo. Tears, Louis, in your eyes! . . . and I know they have some cause. Tell me your grief, then, to relieve my own; for deep, indeed, is the concern I feel for a man such as you! Come now, out with it, speak! Is it really homesickness that's at work in you? And are you really so eager to see again your village belfry that for the nonce your courage fails?"

He had risen, and standing before Guénolé, whom he topped by a head, he laid his wide hand on the lieutenant's shoulder. Louis Guénolé, once so slight and slim, with his long black hair, and cheeks smooth as a girl's, had, to be sure, filled out, and tanned perceptibly, by dint of navigating through calm and tempest, and often enough amid battles where powder was ever burning one's cheeks. Yet, he was still slight and slim, especially when face to face with Thomas, who was tall, broad, and muscular to excess.

"Speak!" repeated Thomas Trublet. But Louis Guénolé at first was reluctant to reply.

"Thomas," he contented himself with saying, "who of us has no wish to see his native belfry? But if, on a certain morning four years ago, we rounded the Spur to issue from Mer Bonne, it was—am I wrong?—to come seek our fortunes here. Who of us, therefore, should complain if fortune smiles upon us, and presently makes us rich?"

Thomas, at these words, shrugged.

"Louis," said he, "of us two, it is I who am half the Norman, through the blood of my mother's veins; and

yet, it is you who today play the Norman, putting me off with worse than '*Voire!*' Louis, I saw you crying a while back. Without so many words, be frank with me. What is your grief? I know well enough *pardieu!* that four years ago we left our city, and that it was to seek our fortunes here. But I also know that in the course of those four years, diverse occasions have presented themselves that would have been easy enough to seize, for sailing homeward and full honourably, to our own land, free to come back then at our pleasure and add further to our hoard. Do you regret these occasions? Tell me, Louis, brother, for I hold you as my brother-in-arms, and brother by blood freely spilt in the many times that, fighting side by side, the same sword or pike has scratched us both. Admit your regret and may the Virgin of the Grand' Porte ever deny me all help if this very day I do not give you reason to be pleased with me!"

In such fashion encouraged, Louis brought himself at last to speak.

"Brother Thomas," he began, "why so many words? I know that you love me, and I love you in like fashion. I know you for a good man, wise and prudent as you are brave. As for our home heath that I long for, many are the boys on board our ship who long for it as do I. And all this you know. If then, after so many fine prizes, after all the pearls of the *Armadilla* and so many other great and well-laden vessels that we have taken, not one of the chances we have had to go to our home city seemed to you worth taking, it must be that no one of these chances was a very good one. So in all patience we await the hour that you will choose. And, according to the terms of our law, which makes you here sole master, after God, what am I more than the rest, though more than the rest I show desire of returning?"

"*Par Dieu Notre Seigneur!*" swore Thomas of a sudden, holding out his two arms, "come here, that I may embrace you! Brother Louis, you are for certain a better man

than I, more given to virtue and more devout, and this I knew before. But the kindness in your heart toward me, who have often been harsh or unjust to you, of that I will never to be unmindful. *Pardieu!* say I, rather would I die without confession than ever fail you in what I owe of brother-love and warm gratitude!"

He was silent long enough to kiss Louis Guénolé on both cheeks. Then he continued; "And now, listen!" said he. "Yes! numerous have been the chances that offered when we might have returned to our home pastures; and many of them were not bad indeed, but good. If I did not seize one of them, it is because I have grave reasons, touching none but me, for remaining a long time absent, as at this moment, I desire to return to St. Malo only when everyone there will have forgotten the happenings of other years . . . for, I tell you, Louis, those happenings were neither to my honour nor advantage. I shall hide nothing from you. Three days before our departure four years ago, I killed a man in duel, and threw his body over the wall of one of the graveyards adjoining the Chapter-house. And from diverse messages which, since then, have reached me from home, I know that this duel which I fought without witnesses, would be held against me, and ill-intentioned people would be still calling it murder and crime, if this very day I should return. Yes, in spite of all our riches and glory so dearly bought. . . . Now you know all. What matter! Though I were to remain alone at La Tortue, and become there the founder of a clan of filibustering Filibusters, I vow by my share in Paradise that on the very first day that is favourable thereto, you, Louis Guénolé, shall in my place take the *Belle Hermine* back to Mer Bonne, and will then, if your heart so dictates, come back to find me there where you left me!"

Having thus taken oath, he related to Guénolé with minute detail the tragic adventure of four years past, and how poor Vincent Kerdoncuff had been laid to rest

under a bush. But in all this, he omitted to tell the true cause of the quarrel—to wit, the part played therein by the sister of the dead man. Whether or not she had, as her brother feared, borne a child, Thomas had never learned.

Guénolé, meanwhile, listened attentively.

"This Vincent," he asked, when the narrative was ended, "this Kerdoncuff, wasn't he the brother of the Anne-Marie about whom there was much gossip linking her name with yours, my Thomas?"

"The very same," said Thomas reddening mightily.

"Then," said Guénolé, "do you think that her family would make any trouble for you, if, giving back a man for the man you killed, you married the sister, as compensation for having killed the brother?"

"But," objected Thomas, "do you believe they would give the girl into my hands, that are still bloody with her brother's blood?"

"It might well be," said Guénolé. "For the girl, according to the gossips, seemed much taken with you and determined to have you."

"It is four years since then," said Thomas.

"That is true," replied Guénolé. "Love may well die in four years; hate too. The surest means to know the answer to this riddle would be to go and see. And, if you want me to take the frigate back to St. Malo, you remaining here, and I coming to join you sometime later, it would be easy enough for me to get information on every point, back yonder, and thereafter inform you of it."

"Thus shall we do, if so be it please God," concluded Thomas. "And as to your return, let us await merely the chance of taking one more fine prize, that you may sail homeward with a full hold."

While thus they were devising and planning, the sun had plunged into the sea, and night, sudden as the night of the tropics, had invaded both sea and sky. Then, as was custom every nightfall, the quartermasters blew

their whistles—"Clear decks," after which all the men not on watch duty can swing their hammocks from the hooks, and go to bed. But, first, they all took their station in the space behind the mainmast, to say their prayers together, for never does sailor on the sea go to sleep without a prayer. And when the boys were all assembled, and when, with due respect, the light-bearers had lifted lanterns above their heads, Louis Guénolé, lieutenant, serving his lads as chaplain, stepped to the ladder of the poop-deck, and with due piety recited the *Pater* and *Ave Maria*, that the sleep of the *Belle Hermine* might be blessed, and the frigate preserved the night through, from tempest and reef.

## CHAPTER VI

"LET us await merely the chance to take one more fine prize," Thomas had said, "so that our ship's hold may be full."

Now prizes of that sort were not to be found every day. This year of grace, 1676, saw the very zenith of Filibustering, the Governor d'Ogéron himself taking a hand in giving chase to the King's enemies, making a veritable holy war of it, in order, said he, to purge the Indies of all other pavillons than those of the Fleur-de-Lys. Curaçao, had, six months earlier, been attacked by a coalition of Adventurers, which had come to succour the royal army led by the coast patrol of Martinique. And it was become since the fashion among Corsairs to assemble thus, several of them together, to risk attack on the islands or towns of the enemy, for lack of being able now, as formerly, to give chase, each for himself, to mere merchantmen. All of which showed as clear as day that Spanish and Dutch, weary of the losses suffered at the Corsairs' hands, were beginning to restrain their commerce, scarce daring now to venture out to sea at all. Where formerly they had been wont to send four ships to sea, they now sent but one. And the privateers were growing uneasy.

For two whole months the *Belle Hermine* cruised about without finding any game worthy of her powder. Finally, Thomas, concluding from the diminishing logs that the *Belle Hermine* needed to have her hull cleared of its weight of barnacles, resolved to make for the Cayes du

Sud, when, rounding Cape Tiburon, which is on the west point of San Domingo, the frigate, by a chance almost miraculous, fell upon that which so long she had been seeking in vain.

It was early in the morning. From the crow's-nest, the man on watch, who had just begun his shift, called out suddenly that a sail had come into view off the starboard bows. Many of the lads climbed to the shrouds, straining their eyes. But they found there was no need to strain for a view of the sail, for it was already fairly near. Ill-lighted by the rising sun, its outline somewhat confusingly blending with the brownish shore-line, it needed close watching to discover it. Louis Guénolé, turning his glasses on the right quarter, announced that a ship was there, in very truth, scudding on the starboard tack, as the *Belle Hermine* was doing, and, doubtless, with the same intention of rounding Cape Tiburon.

"What sort of craft is she?" asked Thomas Trublet, issuing at that moment from the poop-cabin.

"A very big ship," said Guénolé.

"All the better," cried Thomas, "the better prize she!"

Louis Guénolé, however, had not yet put up his spy-glass, but was attentively examining the prize in question.

"What do you see?" asked Thomas.

"I see," he replied after awhile, "I see a high-built hull, all daubed with red, yellow, blue, and white; and I make out trim rigging and new sails."

"What now!" said Thomas, "could it really be a man-o'-war?"

"It looks to me so," said Guénolé.

He held out the spy-glass to Thomas, who looked in his turn.

"Good!" he exclaimed, when he had looked. "This night, if so be it pleases God and our patron saints, we shall be rich. At all events, there is no need of haste. These folk have taken a road on which there is no chance of escape from us. So, let us eat a bite before we go into

battle. We'll be but the livelier for it, and victory all the easier winning."

There was a burst of approval, and the crew ran to the galley in search of the bite to eat. Alone, then, with his lieutenant, Thomas Trublet laid his hands on the youth's shoulders:

"*Mon frère Louis*," said he, gravely enough, "we're in for a redoubtable adventure, it seems, compared with which all that we have done these four years is but tripe and trifling. With that ship yonder, we shall have a tangled skein to spin."

Without a word of reply, the lieutenant nodded assent.

"You saw it as well as I," Thomas continued; "this craft of misfortune is a ship of the line, a double-decker; I am wide of the mark, too, if the bauble she's hoisted to her mainmast doesn't mean there's a personage of importance on board. Some admiral, doubtless. And we're a frail enough cockleshell to try to cast our nets over so big a fish."

"Yes," said Guénolé, impassively.

"You think so too?" asked Thomas, scrutinizing his lieutenant's pale features, that were never so calm as in moments of dire peril. "You think so too? Is it your opinion, then, that it would be better not to risk the venture? Or do you want, once again, to risk all for all, together with me?"

"You decide!" said Guénolé. "I shall obey."

Thomas was considering the deserted reaches of the sea.

"If only some Filibuster would come by," he murmured, "so that we could make up a hunting party for this combat. . . . Why isn't our brave Redbeard here?"

At the name, which was little to his liking, Louis Guénolé silently crossed himself. Thomas, still hesitating, stood with lowered head.

"Louis," said he, finally, "answer me: what do you advise?"

"Nothing," pronounced Louis, in his cold voice. "Do your pleasure. You are the captain."

The men were already coming out of the hatch. Some of them were still chewing the crumbs of biscuit that they had broken with a blow on the knee, and had then thrust into their pockets in haste to reach the deck. Thomas turned a searching glance on each man's face. By sheer brute courage those Malouins of his had already won twenty battles. On all the western seas there was not a single Spanish or Dutch captain who didn't quake in every limb at the mere name of the *Belle Hermine*, that "ship of demons" as they called it. A warlike pride swelled the captain's heart as he stood half-way up the ladder that led from the gangway to the poop-cabin. He leapt onto the bridge, ran to the sailors, clasped two of them in his arms:

"Brothers of the Coast!" cried he with all his lungs, "listen to me! Here we are, a hundred comrades in all, against an enemy numbering perhaps a thousand. We have twenty pieces of eighteen, where they have fifty or sixty pieces of twenty-four or twenty-six, belike. At the shock of their cannon-balls, the thin walls of our *Hermine* will crack like chestnuts in the fire; while our cannon-shot will not pierce even their bulwarks, that are thicker than ramparts. Well then! It is prudent and wise to retreat, and to let this ship escape us . . . full of gold though it is, from carling to the beams of her top battery: for this is one of the galleons of New Spain, providentially strayed from her fleet. Providentially, yes! For the blessed Providence has, no doubt, brought this about for the greater profit of the brave fellows who attack this ship and for the greater shame of the cowards who, like us, let it escape. As for me, I have spoken. What have you to say?"

Bewildered, the lads were silent, casting doubtful looks at their captain. But two of them, who had been examining the Spanish galleon through a cannon-port, turned

indignantly towards their companions, and shouted as loud as Thomas Trublet had shouted before:

"Cowards and traitors those, who refuse to attack on the instant a ship that's full of gold!"

And, on the instant, the same outcry arose from the whole frigate, to a man, for the crew had rushed to the decks.

"*Au combat! Au combat!*"

Flushed with joy, Thomas let go the two men he held tight in his arms:

"So," said he, "the whole lot of you, every mother's son of you, wants to fight, it seems?"

"Yes!" they howled back as one man.

"The word is spoken!" said Thomas. "Louis Guénolé, come here!"

When the lieutenant had obeyed:

"You are my witness, you, and you are my witnesses, every one of you with him," declared Thomas Trublet, "that I swear, by the Christ of the Ravelin, by the Virgin of the Grand' Porte, and by Sts. Malo, Vincent, and Thomas, to kill with this hand all those who yield by so much as a foot in this combat!"

Many a lad there did as Louis Guénolé, awhile back, had done, crossed himself. That was an oath to frighten a man. And it was the most terrible that Thomas Trublet had yet uttered, for only in good earnest did he ever invoke Sts. Malo and Vincent, patrons of their city, and never in vain had he sworn by the Christ of the Ravelin, who more effectively still than the Virgin of the Grand' Porte, protects sailors on the sea, and is also far more severe in punishing such as betray a solemn oath.

Thomas, meantime, right hand upraised, spat to confirm his redoubtable words. Whereupon he commanded:

"Down with your helm! Strike the mainsheets, braces and bowlines. Cast off, gather in sheets, hoist tops'ls! And if that infidel craft escapes us, may I never drain another flagon of wine!"

## CHAPTER VII

THE galleon was still running on a starboard tack, closely hugging the shore. No doubt she purposed, once she had rounded Cape Tiburon, to take a more northerly course, edging up to windward as far as the Cuban coast, and perhaps even to Santiago, the nearest port of San Domingo. The breeze freshening steadily from the northeast permitted them to make the reach without changing tack, sails not too close-hauled. The nearness of the coast, however, was a hindrance to the galleon, and she was not quite free to manœuvre. Otherwise the *Belle Hermine*, far down the wind as she was, would have had difficulty in closing in on her.

Thomas Trublet, luffing a little, the more quickly to cut off the enemy, began a minute inspection of the frigate. And everything being ready for action, he took the precaution to have a long strip of canvas lashed above the gun-ports from stem to stern. An ingenious ruse of naval warfare; for, her batteries masked in this fashion, the *Belle Hermine* differed but slightly in appearance from a merchant vessel, save that she was rigged with high masts and brand-new canvas and cordage—a Corsair's rigging, fit, on all occasions to lend her speed, as much for flight as for pursuit. These high-reaching masts and spreading sails, however, could not be dissimulated; and Thomas, praying that the Spaniard might not notice them, began to unfurl his canvas to the last inch so as not to lose a single knot of the speed now so precious.

The galleon, meanwhile, seemed not yet to have perceived the frigate. At least, it gave not the slightest indication of paying any heed to it, but continued on the same tack, under the same set of sails, tops'ls, foresails, spritsail, brigandine, and mizzentop. After all, it was not impossible that a vessel such as this, a ship of the line, of the first or second rank, should simply not deign to be rendered uneasy by a vessel in appearance three or four times weaker, and apparently quite barren of guns. Moreover, not a single Malouin tar showed his nose on deck. At the helm, Thomas Trublet alone was visible; for he had taken the additional precaution of shutting his men up in the spardeck, as much for the sake of preventing them from discovering the superior strength of the enemy as to keep the enemy himself off guard by concealing from him the real strength of the Corsair. Nevertheless, in spite of so many wise measures cunningly combined, Thomas, now viewing from near at hand the formidable mass of the galleon, again began to doubt of the success of this adventure. His Norman blood awoke in his heart. Without weakening at all because of that, he counted the Spanish cannon piece by piece, balancing them against his own frail artillery. A minute and prudent calculation it was, and from it Thomas drew his plan of battle. One single broadside from the galleon might annihilate the frigate. The best tactics required that he avoid receiving any such broadside. This he could do by gaining on the enemy and coming up under his bows, thus obliging him to fight from a quarter totally bare of guns, as are the bows of all ships; he would have to avoid boarding the enemy too, at least at the beginning of the fray, for a hundred men, however brave they may be, can scarce cope, man to man, with five or six hundred. And the galleon boasted an even larger crew.

Thomas was still scanning the Spaniard. Scarce two thousand yards now lay between the ships, and the enormous hull of the Spanish ship seemed to rise from

the waters like a mountain. The galleon's forecastle was full forty feet above the water line, and the double row of her guns, of gleaming polished bronze, glittered in the sun like so many mirrors. Truly a handsome craft it was, surpassingly handsome. Her lower battery was painted black, the upper one blue, with golden scrollwork, and the woodwork between of a soft faun color. The port-lids were of a brilliant red, as was all the inner trim of the castles, fore and aft, and between-decks. Every bit of paint was fresh, new and shining, and above the hull, four great masts lifted their sails, a snowy pyramid, to the sky.

And now the two thousand yards were no more than five hundred, two hundred, one hundred. The frigate had by this passed the galleon. Thomas, seeing the enemy's quarter, luffed a bit more, to take up his position, as he had resolved to do, directly under his adversary's bows. Such a manœuvre clearly revealed its hostile nature. The Spaniard's captain, at sight of it, shook off his torpor. Luffing likewise, to escape the trap that had been set, he promptly ran up the grand ensign of Castille, further emphasizing this act by means of a cannon-shot. This was an invitation to the Corsair to show his colours. But Thomas Trublet, judging that the time had not yet come, paid no heed to the invitation, nor did he yet unmask his batteries, still cunningly covered over with canvas. Without an instant's hesitation he ran up a fine Castillian flag, exactly like that of the galleon, struck his mast-tops, and reefed his topgallants, as though to salute the vessel, and also to let it come within hailing distance. The better to mark this peaceable intention, he did not omit brandishing a great speaking trumpet, and even, facing the galleon, set it to his lips. He contented himself with the gesture, however, and did not speak, having, indeed, nothing to say. But the Spaniard was taken in by this foolery, and fool enough besides to lose all the time that Thomas so profitably used.

Indeed, in the minute following, the *Belle Hermine*, suddenly counterbracing her foresails, crossed the galleon's bows and lay to. The rest all happened in less time than it takes to tell. Off came the canvas masking the batteries, down came the Spanish colors from the poop; and the terrible St. Malo ensign, blue, with a white cross, and scarlet quartering, ran up to the mast head. The jaws of the cannon, levelled on the ship of the line, spat out ten long tongues of flame, and the broadside, hissing past rigging and masts, cut down, as if by magic, fully half the pyramid of sail towering above the galleon; all of a sudden it gave way, and slid down, crumbling like snow in the sun. Then from one end to another of the enemy's deck rose a furious war-cry, and a mass of armed soldiers rushed to the poop-castle to fight with their musquets, since not one of the fine bronze cannons was in a position to reply to the Corsair's attack. But, when it came to this kind of fighting, the lads of the *Belle Hermine* feared neither men of Spain nor those of any other land. Moreover, scattered about fore and aft of the frigate, sheltered by the netting, and port-lids, they could fire at their ease, coolly taking their time; and thus they had, over the Spanish soldiers, huddled *pêle-mêle* on the poop of their ship, exposed to the enemy's fire, getting in one another's way, howling with rage, and in the utmost disorder, an advantage which proved decisive. In a few moments the decks and gangways of the galleon were strewn with dead, while on the Corsair not a man had fallen.

Seeing this, the men from St. Malo thought victory assured, and three or four of the boldest went so far as to cry out, "Board her!" And for this they came near paying a heavy penalty, for Thomas Trublet brooked no jesting with discipline. Not a mouth save his was to utter a single command, while a combat was on. These were his strict orders. Luckily, for the rash fellows who had cried out, Thomas, who was on the poop-castle

directing the battle, did not hear them, and thus it fell to Louis Guénolé, leader of the musketry, to check this disorder, which he did with his usual moderation, breaking but a single skull for it with his pistol. Nevertheless, silence was once more thoroughly established, and the fight went on without other incident for more than half an hour.

The firing from the galleon slowed up, little by little, for every soldier visible, in no matter what part of the enormous hulk, had fallen under Corsair bullets. The firing from the frigate died down also, for lack of a target. Inert and silent, the Spaniard was drifting like a derelict. Through diverse scuppers and waterways, little red streams were pouring out to the sea, that was now stained with great purple blotches. Thomas, at sight of all this blood, judged that the enemy was near surrender. And determining thereupon to hasten this outcome, he took the tiller from the helmsman and steered in such fashion that the *Belle Hermine* fell upon the galleon and grappled it, rigging against rigging, the enemy's bowsprit thrusting through the Corsair's shrouds. Whereupon Thomas Trublet, letting go the helm, cried out, "Brothers, follow me!" and sword in one hand, pistol in the other, a poignard between his teeth, was the first to leap to the enemy's deck.

Now, counting both soldiers and sailors, there were from five to six hundred men on the galleon, which, it later appeared, had taken on her cargo at Ciudad Real, a rich town of New Granada, and was likewise transporting a goodly number of passengers of various sorts back to Seville in Andalusia. Among them were two fine companies of Spanish infantry—that is to say, nearly four hundred foot soldiers completely equipped. To these must be added the crew, some three hundred and forty sailors, eighty volunteers, a hundred and ten soldiers, one hundred and four army, navy, and petty officers of all grades. The total made more than one thousand com-

batants, of whom the majority were disposed to do their duty. And the musket-shots at the beginning of the combat had brought down but fifty of them, a fair enough number, considering that among the Malouin crew there were less than a hundred muskets in action.

Scarcely had Thomas Trublet, followed by thirty of his men, set foot on the enemy's poop, than, from three large hatchways, leading to the upper and lower batteries of the ship, there burst as from so many volcanoes, three great streams of armed men, pouring out fore and aft like torrents of burning lava, and hurling themselves with appalling fury upon their assailants. Inevitably, the Corsairs, heroes though they were, would have been routed at the first shock, if their protecting star—the Holy Virgin whom they had piously invoked—had not, by supreme good luck, given them the advantage of position. The Spaniards could not reach poop or forecastle save from the narrow half-deck running larboard and starboard of the mizzenmast; and this passage, difficult enough at all times, with scarce elbow-room for four men to fight in, was, as it happened, admirably barricaded by all that had tumbled down from the masts under the Corsair's broadside—yards, sails, heaps of rope, piles of rigging, debris of all sorts made a sort of intrenchment, to which Thomas and his men hastened to add, by erecting a still higher bulwark with the fifty or sixty bodies that littered the poop.

A truly prodigious battle ensued. The Spanish multitude, frantic with vengeful rage that burned the hotter for having been forced to submit so long to the Corsair's murderous fire without being able to give any effective reply, and for having seen many a brave comrade fall from its ranks, rushed to the attack of the poop so impetuously and with such valour that no rampart could have held, it seemed, against such an onslaught. But, behind the simple barricade of fallen rigging and dead bodies stood Thomas and his men. Violent though the

attack was, they repulsed it clean as a whistle. And now the Corsairs were no longer thirty but sixty, eighty; for quick as lightning Louis Guénolé, seeing the danger to which his captain and brother-in-arms was exposed, had rushed to the rescue with every man available on the *Belle Hermine*. And now, in the narrow space around the mizzen, the St. Malo lads were still fighting, one to ten, but without despairing of victory.

And victory they won, though who could describe by what exploits? Who could paint the extraordinary scene presented by those two men, Thomas Trublet and Louis Guénolé, each on guard at the end of the passageways, leading and urging on the handful of their companions, and each facing a numberless host of the enemy who, ceaselessly charging, fell back repulsed, and charged again, their bodies making a mound at the foot of the barricade, a mound which rose higher at each attack! It was nothing less than epic, that fight! And after a thousand blows, and another thousand as mortal, the heap of bodies rose higher than the intrenchment protecting the poop. It would have been child's play then for the Spaniards to have scaled the mound, and overrun the poop, but they had lost courage; and it was the Malouins who, carried away by sheer daring, triumphantly cleared the obstacle and trampled down their terrified opponents. Down through the three hatches that still yawned open the routed Spaniards plunged. Without ceasing to kill, Thomas and Louis led their men in pursuit of the fugitives. And now the deck of the giant ship was become a frightful slaughterhouse awash with splashing rivers of blood. Louis Guénolé, who had twice lost his footing in this slippery torrent and fallen into it, was going about blood-stained from head to foot. And Thomas Trublet, who had broken three sword-blades, his poignard, and the hilts of all his pistols on the enemy's bones, was now brandishing two enormous battle-axes, and fighting as woodsmen fight against great oaks.

## CHAPTER VIII

THE galleon's flag, the proud ensign of Castille, came tumbling down from the torn gear. And Thomas Trublet, grown fierce with victory, savagely trampled the gawdy rag. As was his wont, Thomas, who was prudence itself before giving battle, and a furious fighter in action, little by little grew drunk with killing, and became like some great wild beast of the jungle. Not even the utter collapse of the foe could stay his frenzy. Yet, for the moment, there was nothing more to do. The victors now held the enemy's deck and the two batteries; the mob of the vanquished, panic-stricken, had fled to the lowest depths of the hold; and from it now arose a great moan of terror, broken by wailings and prayers for mercy. Thomas Trublet, notwithstanding, continued implacably riddling with grenades the mangled heaps of the enemy, already in a sufficiently deplorable condition. The wounded were mercilessly despatched, and tossed *pêle-mêle* with the corpses into the sea. And still the carnage went on. Louis Guénolé alone, arms crossed, head sunk on his breast, abstained from taking any part in it, and walked up and down, apart from the others, on the forecastle of the galleon, that was still lashed by the bowsprit to the Corsair's rigging. Now and then Guénolé threw a rapid glance at sky and sea, as though on the watch for bad weather, or the arrival of new enemies. And thus, while the rest forgot all else in the frenzy of

the massacre, the lieutenant was, as ever, mindful of the common safety.

The butchery came to an end at last. Of the thousand combatants on the galleon but a short time before, barely three hundred remained, and these were herded, like so many sheep, in the hold to which they had fled as to their last refuge. Sentinels, musket in hand, stood on guard at every point where a sally might be made, and, as additional precaution, iron gratings were placed before the outlets. Everything seemed now in good order. Thomas Trublet, still atremble with fury and brandishing his dripping battle-axes, suddenly bethought him that in order to take possession of this conquest, it was fitting he should enter the cabin of the poop-castle and take over the ship's papers and other documents that might be there.

Followed by a few of his men, he betook himself thither.

Scarcely had he opened the door of the cabin than shrieks of terror arose, testifying beyond a shadow of a doubt, to the presence of a quantity of women. Indeed, women were not lacking. A great number of men were there too, but these could scarcely be heard for the simple reason that their outcries were less shrill. These were the passengers, at least such of them as were not soldiers. At the first shot they had taken refuge in the cabin, and there they remained pressing close around an aged man who seemed to be the shepherd of the distracted flock. His long beard, purple cassock, and ring of amethyst unmistakably proclaimed his rank and calling. Indeed, his priestly bearing, and majestically upraised forefinger brought the onrushing Corsairs to a sudden stop; and instantly they began showing him the attention and respect due to His Holiness, the Archbishop of Sainte-Foi-de-Bogotà. For he was no less a personage. And it was in his honour that the galleon flew from its mast-head the archepiscopal flag that Thomas had mistaken as

indicating the presence of an admiral of Spain on board the stately ship.

Thomas, then, was advancing, battle-axes upraised, four Corsairs pressing close on his heels. At sight of the archbishop they stopped short, paralysed for the moment, half out of sheer amazement, and half out of genuine terror. For they were all of them good, devout Catholics, and the mere thought of sacrilege filled them with horror. And what sacrilege could be worse than raising a hand against a priest, the anointed of God? With the utmost haste, Thomas bent his knee, even before letting go of his battle-axes, and implored the prelate's benediction, as the only talisman capable of effacing even the very shadow of the sin that he had been within an ace of committing. And the archbishop, relieved as of the weight of a mountain by this honest prayer, and overjoyed to find that he had good Catholics to deal with—folk far less obdurate toward priests than the Huguenots, and easier to satisfy —hastened to bless all those who craved his benediction, and proceeded then to offer a fat ransom, on the sole condition that he and his flock be accorded gentle treatment. And as he spoke, he pointed to the women and men too who were weeping and lamenting as they clung to his knees.

"*Ventrediable!*" thereupon swore one of the Corsairs, no less reassured and overjoyed than the archbishop himself, "by the Devil's guests, this is indeed a holy man, this *curé!* Not only does he give us his benediction *gratis*, but in addition he offers us ringing gold crowns from his coffers!"

"Hold your tongue!" roared Thomas Trublet. "Hold your tongue, hell-timber that you are! If you blaspheme here, I'll kill you where you stand!"

In the first rush of his emotion, Thomas had no more intention of laying upon his conscience the burden of the ransom offered than he had intended soiling his hands with the blood of one consecrated to God. But under the

hide of the Christian, heedful above all things of his soul's safety, ran the blood of the Norman; and the latter soon pricked up his sharp ears. Even before His Holiness had finished the discourse in which he proposed to the Corsairs, as a price for his liberty, to pay them the whole of his revenues for an entire year, or fourteen thousand Spanish ducats,—twenty-one thousand pounds that is, in French money, Thomas, already less wary of a possible sin, and his greed tickled by the very words "pounds" and "ducats," cut short the interview, lest he conclude the bargain too hastily. Resolving to gain time for ingenious computations, he contented himself with commanding the prelate—and he gave his orders with as much precision as deference—to retire for the moment, if he graciously would, to his cabin, and to let the respective cases of his flock be attended to first, on the assurance that nothing was to be feared on its account.

The archbishop obeyed; and without too much ceremony, Thomas set about attending to the sheep.

This interlude had not lasted very long. Yet it had sufficed to check the ferocious and murderous mood of the Corsairs. It was evident enough that now, having received the benediction of His Holiness, they could no longer proceed to massacre the prisoners; and thus this almost miraculous abatement of the bloodthirst of the victors was of great advantage to such of the passengers as were not soldiers. The hatches were opened, and the passengers, rejoicing at finding any refuge whatsoever, even a prison, were promptly swallowed up in the cavernous hold. No sooner had they arrived in the entrails of the ship, however, than they began to count their number, and to look for their friends; and thus they discovered that all the passengers were not there. Several of the women were missing.

Not the first time this, that the crew of the *Belle Hermine* had found women on board a captured ship.

Ordinarily, such an event brought about no serious

disorder. Merchant craft did not often fight the Corsairs; most of them surrendering without striking a single blow, and thus they were taken possession of in peaceable enough fashion. When there were women on board, they paid their ransoms in the same wise as the men, if they were rich; and if either men or women were poor, they did not pay. Of course, it had happened now and then that some girl captive had been raped. But matters went no farther than that. Land folk are too prone to believe that sailors, especially after being at sea for a long time, are tormented by their long abstention from women, and driven to wantonness; on the contrary, nothing is so appeasing to a man's flesh as endless wandering between sea and sky, every muscle wholesomely fatigued by casting off, clewing up, reefing, and hawling sails, and no caress could be more chastely soothing to the skin than the gentle kiss of the sea-breeze.

This time, however, things happened otherwise, for the bloodshed of the hard-won battle had inflamed the senses of Thomas Trublet's men. No sooner had they caught sight of the terrified women squalling and grovelling at the feet of His Holiness the Archbishop of Sainte-Foi, than they were seized with a brutal and overmastering desire to possess them. And no sooner had the archbishop retired, and the men passengers been herded in safe quarters, than every member of the crew instinctively laid a hand on whichever of the women was most pleasing to him among those near by and pushed her forthwith toward some dimly lighted corner of the ship. Even Thomas Trublet, who, in other circumstances would have punished the offenders with instant death, even Thomas, yielding to the general contagion, did the same. . . .

His broad hand grasped the shoulder of a slim dark girl who stood apart from her companions at the back of the main cabin, the only member of the herd it seemed, who had not shrieked with terror as the Corsairs forced open the door.

Already muffled cries could be heard coming from the dim corner into which one of the crew had pushed his captive.

Thomas Trublet all of a sudden shuddered with desire and his flaming cheeks turned deathly pale. The dark girl, pale too as death, still stood silent, her black, widely dilated pupils looking deep into his. She was of a good height and strangely beautiful, her skin of an even golden tint. With her little sharp teeth she was biting her under lip, and a little blood ran from the wound she had made.

With a sudden movement, Thomas Trublet, yielding to impulse, sprang on his prey, threw her down, crushed her to the ground, hung over her.

With a desperate wrench she eluded him, regained her footing, tried to escape.

He caught her and held her back. Again she eluded him, but, changing her tactics, faced him squarely. Grasping at the poignard in the Corsair's belt, she managed to pull it out, and brandished it, threatening, ready to strike. Naturally enough, he advanced on her with a great brutal burst of laughter. She stepped back, pressing the poignard against her own breast. And very loud, in a strange *patois*, half-French, half-Spanish, "Come one step nearer, and I kill myself!" she cried, "And may the Brunette of Macareña curse your mother, your sister, and your lover, and smother them in their sleep!"

Now Thomas Trublet had no notion what the Macareña might be, any more than he knew who this Brunette was, and he was greatly astonished by such strange talk, and frightened by it, for it sounded to his ears like the magic of a witch's incantations or some heathenish spell. So he let go his hold of the dark girl, already in his grasp, and even pushed her quickly away from him, lest the sorcery take effect at once. And thus, in the semi-darkness of the main cabin, while the moans of violated women rose from every corner of the galleon, they faced one

another, the dark girl still bleeding at the lip, and still brandishing her knife, her eyes savage and menacing—and in front of her Thomas, fists clenched, mouth twisted, eyes wild, ready to spring upon her, and yet not daring, enraged, frenzied, and intimidated all at the same time.

# BOOK III

# THE CAPTURED CITY

## CHAPTER I

ROTHER," Thomas Trublet, ship's captain, was saying to Louis Guénolé, his lieutenant, on the evening of that same day, "the opportunity we were resolved to wait for, God has just placed in our hands. But a while ago, to warm the courage of our lads, I was telling them that this galleon was full of gold, not knowing how closely I shaved the truth. We are rich . . . so rich that it would be a sin not to put our wealth in a place where it will be safe from all mischance. We might course the seas twenty years or more, skimming every ocean of the globe, and never again find such a prize. To my way of thinking, brother, we could do no better than to scud along towards the Tortoise, which is but fifty sea leagues from here. We can make it in two legs. And there we'll in some fashion get a new mast for our ship which you are then to take, with as many of our boys as you need, and make off, as soon as may be, for St. Malo. For it is there only that we will get our due profit from this prodigious cargo."

"So shall it be then," answered Louis Guénolé, "and wisely planned."

Battered though she was, the galleon could still carry sail on her lower masts, and this sufficed to haul wind enough for so short a journey. Besides, the *Belle Her-*

*mine* was to escort her at close range, and at need, could tow her into port.

It was true enough that never in the memory of the Corsairs had so fabulous a prize ever been captured. According to the roughest of estimates, the metal alone, both in coin and bullion, came to more than four hundred and forty-three thousand pounds—counting the silver bullion at ten piastres the pound, as custom is. Add to this great heaps of jewels, many of them marvellously set, stuffs of great price, precious woods, spices, quantities of provisions, syrups and wines, and munitions of war. In short, enough, as Thomas had said, to make every man on the *Belle Hermine*, from her captain and lieutenant to the youngest sailor and cabin boy, rich for the rest of his life—to say nothing of the victualler and the owner.

"*Parguienne!*" Thomas repeated joyfully, "brother Louis, you will certainly make a fine triumphal entrance in Mer Bonne! The home folk will never believe their eyes when they see you, who went away the lieutenant of a measly little frigate, come sailing into port as the captain of a fine big ship of the line!"

But Louis Guénolé was looking hard at his chief.

"For me it is as you say," said he. "But what of you?"

"Me?" said Thomas, suddenly grown grave.

They were alone, face to face in the cabin, the door closed. Nevertheless, Thomas lowered his voice as he replied:

"You know that I don't care to show myself in St. Malo before I am quite certain there is no risk. . . ."

But Louis Guénolé gave a shrug.

"Now that you are rich, and covered with glory, do you really still believe that you cannot go home? And do you still believe that the sister of Vincent Kerdoncuff . . . *requiescat in pace* . . . will not gladly give you her hand and become a good bourgeoise, with a house of her

own, and coffers full of good gold ducats? For all this will belong to you so soon as the *Belle Hermine* runs her keel on the sands of Tousiaux."

"*Voire!*" murmured Thomas, pensively.

At first he had listened complacently enough to his lieutenant, with every sign that Louis Guénolé's words were pleasant to his ears. But, at the name of the man whom years past he had slain, his brow had brusquely darkened. And now, while Louis was still talking of Vincent's sister, Thomas was looking uneasily towards the locked and bolted door leading into the cabin wherein stood the captain's bed.

"And talking about girls and such like," Louis went on, his own brow clouding anxiously, "what do you propose to do with that one in there?"

He pointed towards the door of the captain's cabin. At which Thomas frowned and lowered his eyes.

"How do I know?" said he, hesitantly.

"Why, then, are you keeping her a prisoner on board our ship, and in your own cabin too?"

"How do I know?" he repeated.

They were both silent for a time. Then Thomas slowly found words for the anxiety lying heaviest on him.

"And you," he asked, "you, Louis, who are a better Christian than I, more devout, and of better counsel . . . do you believe that yonder girl in there is a witch?"

"How do I know?" it was Guénolé's turn to say.

On the bare chance of it, however, he crossed himself.

A few hours earlier, as soon as the galleon had been manned, Thomas Trublet had given orders that the dark girl—she who had so boldly resisted him at the sacking of the Spaniard—should be brought on board the *Belle Hermine*.

Why? He had been truthful enough when he told Guénolé that he didn't know. Unfulfilled desire perhaps, exasperated desire . . . and fear also, superstitious fear.

The Brunette of Macareña, still unexplained, caused Thomas a singular anxiety, the more so as Louis Guénolé, whom he had several times questioned on this subject, had not known what to answer, and had even himself appeared to be greatly disturbed.

"The Spanish," he had sagaciously observed, "are for the most part good Christians and Catholics. Nevertheless, there are to be found among them numerous heretics such as the Bohemians, the Moors, and the Jews, and even necromancers. If this damsel of yours happens to be of their number, we shall all have good reason to repent of it!"

Said "damsel," while her captors were awaiting some enlightenment as to her true nature, was held prisoner in Thomas's own cabin. But Thomas had not again sought her out there. He betrayed not the slightest haste to do so, and had in no wise cut short any of the operations incident to manning the prize. These operations besides required considerable prudence and many precautions. The combat had been a bloody one. Of the ninety-two men the frigate's crew had numbered before the attack, thirty had been killed, and eight maimed or so grievously wounded that it would be long before they could be counted on to take part in working the ship; to say nothing of lesser injuries of which, naturally, no one took any account; for the men of the *Belle Hermine's* crew whose blood had not run freely, or in some degree at least in this affray, would have been hard to find. Thomas then, having but fifty-four members of his crew to count on, but resolved rather to abandon his very own *Belle Hermine* than to sink the prize ship, had caused thirty-six names to be drawn by lot, so as to man the prize with a proper crew, with Louis Guénolé as their trusty captain. And this left but eighteen men on board the frigate. However, any rebellion among the prisoners

could not fail to be easily quelled. As to possible encounters with hostile craft, the eighteen combatants of the Corsair, and the thirty-six of the galleon were too few by far to man the guns of both vessels. Thomas, therefore, counted, should such emergency overtake him, on his flag —the dread emblem of St. Malo!—to protect his capture and its rich merchandise, believing that there would be few ships, whether Dutch or Spanish, venturesome enough to attempt battle against two adversaries of such doughty appearance and size, since neither of them, by any slightest sign, betrayed the actual weakness of its condition.

For the moment, in any case, there was no such danger to be feared. As frequently occurs in the Antilles, the wind had died down at sunset, and there was now a dead calm which could not fail to hold every ship upon the sea as motionless as the air. In the centre of an unbroken horizon, both ships drifted along side by side in perfect security. Louis Guénolé, without any sacrifice of prudence, had lowered his long-boat into the smooth water, to go and sup with Thomas Trublet that he might in more leisurely fashion discuss with him every detail of what now remained to be done. For after winning so fine a victory, it was but fitting to draw as great profit from it as might be. And thus every imaginable occurrence was prudently foreseen and thoroughly discussed by the two captains. And this done, the talk had, stitch by stitch, run on to what has above been reported.

Silent now, both Thomas Trublet and Louis Guénolé were gazing through the open port-holes at the motionless water and the star-strewn sky. On the jet-black of the sea the moon poured a slender streamlet of quicksilver.

"Brother Thomas," said Louis Guénolé abruptly, "it causes me pain and anguish to leave you thus alone in

this land, among these evil and maleficent folk, while I, without you, go to our blessed Brittany where there are so many holy churches and efficacious pilgrimages."

"*Las!*" said Thomas, shaking his head.

He was still staring at the black waters. But now a scarcely perceptible breath of wind was lifting the calm ever so slightly.

"Brother Thomas," said Louis Guénolé again, "count on me to do every single thing according to your desire, and to come back to you with the utmost haste, bringing you the good news you await, the news that will allow you to return home at last, without fear or risk. But know you this well, brother Thomas, that, in spite of all the pain it has caused me to stay so long away from our homeland, and in spite of all the delight it will be to me once more to enter our city, and, thanks to your valour, so honourably to pass through its gates, yet I am none the less saddened not to have you as my companion and captain when, as the custom is, we cast our small anchor before the door of the Grand' Porte inn, or when, later, we shall offer tapers in thanksgiving at the great altar of the cathedral, while mass is said in thanksgiving for our safe return."

"*Las!*" said Thomas a second time.

And anyone who had seen him then, contrite and saddened, his clear eyes dimmed with two great tears of longing for the sweet Breton motherland that Louis Guénolé's words had called up before him, would have found it hard to recognize in this simple fellow, so tender now to the touch of pity, the terrible Corsair Thomas Trublet, more greatly feared by enemy merchants than tempest or shipwreck.

Awhile later, Louis Guénolé's boat returned to the galleon. The breeze by now had freshened enough to swell, though with lazy puffings, the sails of both craft; and it was expedient to take advantage of the slightest

breath of wind in order to reach the Tortoise as soon as might be.

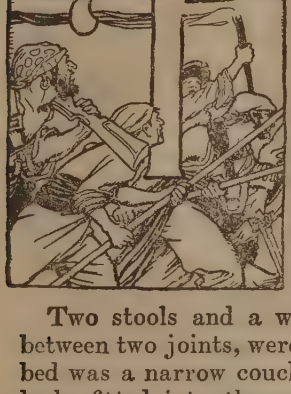
Thomas, notwithstanding, gave orders to none but the boatswain, and did not trouble to direct manœuvres himself. They were simple enough besides. He stayed in the main cabin, his elbow resting on the sill of the port, and watched his lieutenant's long-boat moving away into the night. With rhythmic motions the oars struck the dark water, and a strange phosphorescence danced in the foam of the churning water.

The craft disappeared; and now, on the deck of the *Belle Hermine*, the patter of bare feet, proof that the crew were attending to the set of the sails, had stopped; all other noises little by little ceased, and the ship slept, completely silent.

Thomas straightened up, and moved away from the port-hole; then taking down one of the lanterns hanging from the rafters of the cabin, he walked towards the bolted door opening into the captain's cabin.

Before entering, for the most fleeting of moments, he hesitated.

## CHAPTER II



THE cabin was not very large. The lantern in his hand lit it from end to end, casting a yellow glow on the panels of painted wood. Shadows danced on the smoke-blackened ceiling, and the metal of the small porthole glittered.

Without a sound, Thomas Trublet closed the door, then held his lantern high, the better to view what lay before him.

Two stools and a wardrobe, fitted into the planking between two joints, were the sole pieces of furniture. The bed was a narrow couch opposite the wardrobe and similarly fitted into the partition. And on this bed, arms and legs bound by a rough hempen cord, the prisoner, spent with anguish and exhaustion doubtless, lay sleeping; nor did the light, falling full on her face, rouse her.

Had there ever been any doubt of her beauty, there was none now. Sleep, softening the features that a while since had been hard and cruel, revealed the girl's extreme youth. She could scarcely be more than sixteen years of age—perhaps less. Yet the golden amber tints of her skin, the clearly cut arch of her lips, the firm line of the nose with its sensitive nostrils, the blue ebony of her hair, divested her face of all childish ingenuousness and soft gentleness. As he scanned the girl's virginal features, and noted the vigour they expressed even in the serenity of sleep, Thomas was again assailed by doubt. Could the child of man and woman, born according to the laws of nature, so visibly possess, even in unconsciousness, such strength of will as there he read? Was this not

rather the effect of some demon's work, of some witchcraft? Instinctively, Thomas raised his eyes toward the great wooden crucifix suspended above the couch, and the shell containing holy water which was nailed to the boards beneath it—the sole ornaments of the cabin, bare in every respect as a monk's cell. Thomas was at great pains to renew almost daily the holy water in this modest font, from the cask blessed, as a signal favour, by the bishop of St. Malo. Surely, no sorceress could have slept so peacefully beneath the divine image and the exorcising liquid! Yet, by way of additional precaution, Thomas dipped the fingers of his right hand into the shell, and sprinkled the sleeper. She stirred, but did not even by as much as a sigh betray distress. Certainly, had she been possessed of Satan, she would have writhed as though pierced with a hot iron! Well then, here was proof, and good proof, that there was nothing rightly diabolical about the prisoner.

Suddenly grown audacious, Thomas laid his heavy hand on the girl's slender shoulder. She woke with a start, and with a single quick motion lifted herself up on the bed. Yet she gave no cry, not being, it seemed, of those weak creatures who yelp and whine at any provocation. Though the binding of her hands greatly hindered her, she leaned on her arm as best she could and succeeded in propping herself up on an elbow. But never once did she remove her eyes from those of Thomas, who, again perturbed, knew not what to say, and remained a long time silent.

Finally, he spoke, in his rough Malouin voice, made rougher and hoarser still by the tempest winds of the wide sea.

"Who are you? What is your name, your country? Where were you coming from, and whither bound when I captured you?" he asked.

The girl gave him no answer, but continued to look fixedly at him in silence.

A whole minute elapsed.

"Who are you?" he asked again.

Still she was silent.

Again, and louder, he said:

"Don't you understand me?"

She did not even shake her head. She gave no sign, whether "Yes" or "No."

Embarrassed, he hesitated a few seconds. Suddenly, he remembered.

"*Pardieu*, yes!" he growled, irritated. "You understand me, for, but a few hours ago, you were talking to me."

The curiosity aroused in him a while back grew stronger.

"This Brunette of Macareña you called on for help . . . who is she?"

On the tightly closed lips flickered a half smile, a grimace of supreme disdain. But the lips gave no other reply. And at once the scornful face, that for a scarcely perceptible moment had lost its impassivity, became as mask-like as before.

Now that he was reassured, and felt no fear, rage was slowly mounting in the heart of Thomas Trublet. Brutally, his hand shook the frail shoulder.

"So I must loose your tongue?" he cried. "Take care! I know how! You'll not play the mute with me, Moor, or heretic, or whatever you are!"

At this she gave a leap, strangely sensitive, it seemed, to this insult. It was her turn now to cry out:

"That's not true! You lie, you lie, you dog's tongue, dog, dog, son of a dog, you thief and heretic! I am a Christian, by the grace of our Saviour of the Great Power, and by the intercession of our Brunette! Yes! A better Christian, and a better Catholic than such a beggarly cutpurse as you!"

Dumbfounded, he knew not what to say. And then, in the tone a queen might have used, she commanded him:

"Untie this cord!"

And she thrust her tightly bound hands towards him.

Mysteriously subdued in spirit, Thomas Trublet, the Corsair, obeyed.

Her hands freed, the girl lightly opened and closed her fingers—slender and pointed they were—as though to bring the blood back to the numb flesh. Then she made a quick motion as though she would loosen the cord that bound her legs. But stopping short, she pointed to the knot.

"Untie that too!" she commanded, more imperiously than before.

And Thomas, as before, obeyed.

And now she was sitting at ease on the bed, much as if it had been a comfortable armchair, while Thomas Trublet stood before her. It was she now who questioned Thomas, and Thomas, with a strange docility, answered her.

"Who are you? What is your name? Your country?" and he had told her, not without some injury to his pride that he, the man and master, should thus suffer a strange reversal of rôles. She, the captive, the vanquished, at the mercy of the victor, had listened without a trace of agitation, to his formidable name, the terror of the western Indies—Thomas Trublet. . . . But now, less scornful perhaps, or, it may be, satisfied at having so quickly tamed such an enemy, she consented to speak, and even replied, though still disdainfully enough, to the questions that he had again begun, almost timidly, to ask her.

Juana was her name. And she was seventeen. . . . Seventeen, yes! Not fifteen. . . . What an idea! Did people take her for a *niña?* She was from Seville too, a pure-blooded Andalusian . . . daughter of a hidalgo, she proudly declared. And to Seville she was returning, on the galleon, to accomplish a pious vow, before coming

back to the Indies to join her family. . . . What was her family called? It was too fine a name to be spoken in such a place as this den of thieves! . . . Her parents? They were great nobles in the proud city from which the galleon had started out—Ciudad Real de Granada, a city so rich and powerful that not a king in all Europe could either buy or conquer it! And certainly it was more glorious to be the Governor or Captain-Mayor of that city than to lead a band of savage pirates from sea to sea, pillaging and murdering every honest ship's crew they met!

Indifferent to the insult, Thomas inquired:

"Were your parents on the ship with you? And have I captured them? Or killed them?"

But she burst into a proud laugh:

"Fool that you are! . . . had they been there, it's you who would have been captured and hanged too from your own yard-arm. Not even twenty bandits such as you would frighten my father, or my brother, or the brave hero I am to marry!"

Thomas recognized something of Spanish boastfulness in this, for he had met it before and found it always the same. Mindful of his own pride, he gave a shrug.

"Not a man of your race has ever looked on me without fear or fatal ending," he growled.

And as she laughed, more harshly still, to hide her anger and spite, he took courage and looked her full in the face.

"And if they were so brave, these countrymen of yours, would you be here now? In to-day's combat I conquered more than a thousand enemies, and my men were less than a hundred!"

Violently, he forced her to silence as she was opening her mouth to reply.

"Be still! Remember that you are my prisoner!"

She swallowed her rage. And so they remained, face to face, speechless, and vengeful.

Again she made a brusque effort to speak.

"My father will pay you a fat ransom for me, and you'll be able to satisfy your greed, pirate!"

Haughtily, and with a strange expression in his wide eyes—of the ever-changing hue of the sea they were—he answered her:

"And who told you that I would take any ransom for you?"

For the first time he saw her give a start. Throwing back her shoulders, and leaning both hands on the bed she met him squarely.

"What then do you expect to do with me?" she asked.

For ten long seconds he hesitated, his cheeks grown purple with the rush of blood. Disdainfully, she balanced on her bent arms, alternately throwing out and contracting her breast. Suddenly, he sprang on her, like a man that is drunk, crushing her arms in his sailor's hands that were as strong as steel, and hurled her down on the bed.

"This is what I shall do to you!" he cried.

And he thought in that very moment to possess her. But she resisted him as she had already resisted him, doubling up her knees and turning away her head, avoiding his lips as she avoided his body. For a long time he struggled, letting go one of her arms in order to grasp her waist or hip and bruising her flesh in his powerful fingers. But the girl defended herself with such agility that not even his brutal attack could subdue her. And at last, so well did she use her one free hand that he gave a sudden howl of pain, jumping quickly back, struck, clawed or punched below the belt in the sensitive spot.

"Strumpet!" he howled, frantic with pain and fury. "Strumpet! Bawd that you are! But you'll not get the better of me for long! I'll show you what you are here for, or burst, that I swear by the Virgin of the Grand' Porte! Even though I should have to anchor each limb of your body to a corner of the bed, and quarter you alive!"

"Do it if you dare!" she cried, her eyes flashing. "Your

Virgin—God knows what sort she is, a Virgin for dogs she must be, a heretic Virgin, to be the Virgin of such as you—will never prevail against the Brunette of Macareña, to whom I have dedicated my maidenhood. She will protect me against all cutthroats of your sort!"

She stopped to take breath, winded by the struggle, her breast rising and falling as she panted, swelling the great black shawl she wore over her shoulders in the fashion of Seville. More calmly, but none the less resolutely, she went on:

"Maid I am, and maid I shall remain, be assured of that, Monsieur Pickpocket! This skin of mine covers blue blood, and is not for a peasant such as you! Neither by force nor ruse shall you win me. If you set me free, you'll get a fine ransom. If not, you'll get nothing, neither money nor me. Whatever else you doubt, rest assured of that!"

He was standing now at the back of the cabin, arms crossed, and controlling, with all the force of his will, both his pain and his anger. Motionless, he listened as his prisoner defied him. Then, very coldly, he answered:

"And you, rest assured of this: that here, no one commands save, after God, myself; that I never do aught save my good pleasure, and never shall; further, that you will continue to be my captive, and my slave, whether maid or otherwise, and that I shall never give you back to your people . . . never!"

She leapt to her feet, took three steps forward, and came close enough to touch him. Then, looking into his eyes, she cried:

"So much the worse for you!"

"So much the worse for you!" he replied.

He went out, leaving her alone in the cabin, and bolting the door behind him; and thence betook himself to the now empty bed of Louis Guénolé.

## CHAPTER III

THREE days later, at sunrise, the *Belle Hermine*, followed by the captive galleon, cast anchor in the port of the Tortoise, under the protecting cannon of its western battery, and the great eastern tower. And promptly there gathered on the beach a great crowd, marvelling much at the prodigious prize, and amazed that a Corsair frigate with but twenty cannon should have captured a ship of the line fourfold better armed and in scantling ten times as strong. Particularly amazing to the crowd it was that after such a combat, which must have been a stubborn battle, the *Belle Hermine* should come into port with not a rope of her rigging injured, nor a single gash in her hull. And thus for Captain Thomas Trublet, and his fearsome knowledge of warfare, the Filibusters present, and other folk of the sea, accustomed though they were to the perils of sea-fights between great ships, felt the esteem in which they already held him doubling and trebling as they beheld the proofs of his terrible skill.

Monsieur d'Ogéron, the Governor, would not wait even until the hero came to pay him the due visit of ceremony, but was among the first to make off for the *Belle Hermine* in his own skiff; and joyfully he threw himself into Thomas's arms, embracing him in his own name and that of the King, who, said he, could not have failed to be similarly overjoyed had he been able thus to see one of his own subjects, and one of the citizens of his good city of St. Malo—the ever proud and ever faithful—carry off

such a victory over the enemies of the State. Whereupon, covered with glory, Thomas Trublet and Louis Guénolé, and several of their companions, betook themselves with the Governor in solemn procession to give due thanks to God in the chapel which served the island as church and cathedral. To this chapel, Thomas made a gift of all that the Spanish archbishop carried with him in the galleon—rich vestments such as stoles, rochets, chasubles, and sacred ornaments, and crosses, pyxes, monstrances, and chalices. As to the archbishop himself, he was constrained to join the procession and even to lead it and officiate in person, and to chant the *Te Deum* in celebration of the defeat of his own people. Of which, it must be said, he acquitted himself in gallant fashion.

Matters no less important were then taken up. The question as to the fate of the prisoners was reserved for later discussion, their captors being content for the moment, to have them disembarked and handed over to the care of Monsieur d'Ogéron, who forthwith populated his gaols with them, setting the more robust among their number to work on his plantations. All this, of course, until such time as the ransoms should be determined upon. Alone of all the prisoners, the Archbishop of Sainte-Foi was treated with high consideration, set at liberty, and even honourably conducted to the Spanish port of Santiago, in the island of Cuba. Whereat the good father showed himself to be deeply moved, though he protested, as though flayed alive, at the ransom of sixty-six thousand Spanish ducats, or a hundred thousand French crowns—not a jot less—demanded of him in lieu of that he had offered, only one fifth as large. The deacons, canons, archdeacons, and almoners who had accompanied His Holiness were, meanwhile, held at La Tortue, as hostages for the archbishop's ransom, and no exception was made save in the case of a handsome choir boy whom the archbishop pressingly sought to have released, saying that he desired to keep the child with him,

to aid him, so he averred, in performing the mass. This prayer of His Holiness was willingly acceded to, all the more so as Monsieur d'Ogéron had learned, from his secret agents, that the cherished choir singer was none other than the prelate's son; and much would honest folk have scrupled to separate the child from his father, particularly as no necessity constrained them to so harsh or so cruel an act.

The repairs on the galleon were proceeding at a rapid rate. Neither masts nor yards were lacking at the Tortoise, nor ship's trappings of any sort. The rigging torn or damaged by Malouin cannon-balls was promptly mended or replaced with new cordage, and not fifteen days had elapsed when one fine morning Louis Guénolé came to render to Captain Thomas an account of what had been accomplished. All preparations were now complete, and the galleon ready to set sail, not a bolt or pin lacking. Nothing remained to be done but to divide the crew.

"Captain Louis," said Thomas, "in this matter I desire you to act as master, for this is but reasonable, since you are the one who, for our mutual advantage, are to conduct our prize to France. . . . So then, speak your mind. What seems best to you? And how think you such a ship should be manned?"

Louis Guénolé gave a shrug.

"Captain Thomas," said he, "Monseigneur Colbert, who knows what he's about, would certainly not put to sea on a ship of like tonnage without full two hundred and fifty sailors and one hundred and twenty soldiers, duly inscribed on the muster-roll."

"You are right," approved Thomas, and gave a great burst of laughter.

"But," continued Guénolé, "we have neither two hundred and fifty sailors nor one hundred and twenty soldiers. We have in all but fifty-four valid men, for there's no use

counting our eight wounded and maimed of whom not one, for the moment, could even gather in the sheets."

"Yes," said Thomas. "And although fifty-four good Malouin fellows are worth a hundred and twenty soldiers, and two hundred and fifty sailors, and more besides, when it comes to boarding a grappled ship—as the crew of the galleon soon learned, if they didn't know it before!—it's none the less true that to manage four sets of sails, with the highest a matter of seventy yards, and in addition, to man seventy-four heavy cannon, two batteries on a side, fifty-four lads are but fifty-four lads, or one hundred and eight arms for the whole job. You'll have not a man too many, brother Louis. Take the whole crew then, and let me stay alone on the *Belle Hermine*, for I can handle her myself in this safe roadstead. At need, what's to prevent my recruiting some brave Adventurers from our friends the Filibusters? There wouldn't be many of them who'd refuse a hunting party with Thomas Trublet!"

Indeed, Thomas Trublet did not go very far astray in his calculations. Fifty-four men, even though they were Corsairs, fell far short of the number needed to man the galleon. From this number it would have been the height of imprudence to subtract even one. On the other hand, the *Belle Hermine*, riding at anchor in a friendly port, under the protection of the batteries on the coast, had but few hazards to fear.

For a long time, however, Louis Guénolé refused to accept Thomas's proposal, just though it was. He was too experienced a sailor to contest its wisdom; but to abandon Thomas in this fashion, leaving him alone on his disarmed frigate, like a watch-dog chained and forgotten by his masters in the courtyard of an abandoned house, against this Louis could not but protest. Too often, and in similar fashion, he had seen the Filibusters abandon some one of their chiefs in some desert island, when said chief had in some fashion displeased said Filibusters, leaving him with a meager supply of guns, pistols, sabres,

and a small provision of powder and bullets. And could such barbarity find any excuse, when its victim was the best and bravest Corsair captain of all the Americas, and at the very moment when he had bestowed on his whole crew both riches and fame?

But Thomas countered all such arguments with a laugh. And finally he brought his hand down on Guénolé's shoulder, bidding him be silent.

"Brother Louis," said he, "I know that you love me, and I see where the shoe pinches. But of this you may feel sure. I shall do as I have decided, and things will be managed as I have resolved. There is no cause to fear, besides. Aren't you coming back within six or seven months, as soon as you have put the cargo you take with you in safe keeping? *Sapergouenne!* You have but to say the word, and I pledge you my faith that, on the day you return, you'll find me fatter, fitter, more clear-eyed, and in better health than you see me now at this very moment!"

"That may be," murmured Louis Guénolé, anxiously, "but health of body is not the most important."

Thomas, himself disturbed now, knit his brows and suddenly ceased laughing. Nevertheless, with a brusque gesture, he swept away the troublesome suggestion, not even allowing it to take shape in words.

And thus, as Thomas decreed, the galleon weighed anchor the following week, and set sail for the gentle land of France, carrying away with her every man of the *Belle Hermine's* crew. The *Belle Hermine* remained behind. From the taffrail Thomas Trublet, ship's captain, watched his men, whom he had so many times led to victory, sail away, saluting him as the galleon glided past, with as many huzzas and waving caps as ever greeted the admiral of a squadron, or the vice-admiral of the King's united fleets on the evening of a day when, in drawn battle, a glorious victory has been won.

## CHAPTER IV

HENCEFORTH, for many a day and week, for a year belike, or more, Thomas Trublet was to live as solitary as a hermit on his frigate where the only men under his command were the handful of maimed and wounded who had been judged too useless to embark on the galleon, and who continued as best they could to nurse their wounds.

Thomas, well and strong—many a time had he been wounded in battle, but always with slight harm to his robust body—seemed ill-adapted enough to the rôle of nurse now forced upon him. Nor did the Filibusters and other inhabitants of the Tortoise fail to be greatly astonished at learning of the strange decision taken by the most famous Corsair of America in thus abdicating his rank, and stranger still, with what seemed perfect resignation. Many were those who at first refused to believe it, and received the news as an idle story, asserting that the great Trublet would never have let his lieutenant and crew sail away on the prize which certainly, without him, they would never have won. How improbable that a man such as he should remain on that frigate out yonder, at the end of the roads, its top-mast spars lowered to the deck and stowed away. Why, anyone could see that it was far more in need of a care-taker than a captain! . . . Yet one by one they were forced to surrender to evidence, when fishermen and sailors passed close to the *Belle Hermine* in their skiffs, and brought back word that they had seen Thomas

Trublet in person walking like a lost soul up and down fram larboard to starboard and from starboard to larboard of the poop-castle, or leaning hour after hour over the rail, head propped on his hands, silently contemplating the sea. Greater amazement than ever at this news! But soon the rumour spread that this extraordinary retirement, following close upon four years of ceaseless activity, was for secret reasons. Among the prisoners taken on the galleon, Thomas Trublet had reserved for himself—so the tongues wagged!—a young Spanish lady of noble birth, and beautiful as the dawn. At which news, a young nephew of the Governor's, fresh from college, did not miss the occasion of making several apt allusions, proofs of his learning, to My Lord Hannibal, and Capuan delights.

"*Pardieu!*" said they who smacked their lips over this tale, "love is the master of all men! Here's our Thomas now like so many proud heroes before him, campaigning in the land of Romance!"

All in all, this warfare in which Thomas was now engaged, was like to prove the hardest that Thomas had ever experienced.

The captive Juana had in no wise grown gentler with time. Whether her gaoler used patience or violence, he met with the same ungovernable stubbornness, and every onslaught he made broke down before the girl's invulnerable Spanish arrogance, now transformed into savage virtue. By not a jot or tittle had the positions they had taken up on the very first day of their encounter been changed. The girl still lived in Thomas's cabin, while Thomas occupied Louis Guénolé's quarters. Only rarely did the combatants leave their respective fortresses. And anyone watching them closely would have found it hard to say which was slave and which was master. Yet no day passed that Thomas did not enter Juana's cell, and on the pretext of a courteous solicitude for her comfort, repeat his vain endeavours to talk to her. Truth to tell,

Thomas suffered from a real anxiety on her account, and went so far as to bestow upon his prisoner an Indian slave-girl bought especially for her. Which gift Juana had accepted with her habitual queenly hauteur.

Of love there was no question, not at least in words. For in these private interviews of theirs, Thomas and Juana faced one another as adversaries, and nothing more, the one ready to attack, the other intent solely on determined, obstinate defence. But Thomas, twice repulsed—and how vigourously the reader knows—was not eager to risk a third defeat. And so it came about that, while they watched one another, ready to bring finger nails, teeth, and fists into prompt action, they conversed together with a fair amount of civility. Juana had at first obstinately maintained silence in order to mark her supreme disdain. But now she thought better of it, and was willing to talk, the better to crush her enemy with her own superiority, or, at least, with her pretensions to superiority. And in this wise it happened that Thomas was regaled with a thousand details and anecdotes, all extremely favourable to his captive, and all tending to convince him that she was in truth a very great lady—though as to this last Thomas was never quite so thoroughly impressed by the stories with which she provided him as Juana could have wished.

According to her narrative, Juana had been born in Seville some seventeen years earlier. And it was in this splendid city, the most vast and most noble of all Spain, or indeed of all Europe—so Juana affirmed—that, with her nurse's milk, she had absorbed the special and fervent devotion she would never cease to accord to the all-powerful madonna of Seville, Our Lady of the Macareña, familiarly referred to, in those regions, as "Our Brunette," for the reason that the pious workman who carved her statue had made her in the likeness of a dusky-haired Andalusian. Thomas, at this point, was much relieved at last to learn that this Brunette, who had so

seriously alarmed him, was none other than a Spanish sister of his own good Malouin Virgin of the Grand' Porte.

In Seville, it seemed, Juana's family held a social position of the first rank—all this according to her own account. But as the too numerous Sevillian population was prompted at times to emigrate and seek its fortune in the New World, this family, high in rank though it was, had deigned one fine day to assume the leadership of this emigration, and conduct all those who so desired to the Indies. Thus several thousand men had left the Spanish shores, and women and children with them, all of them making a vow that they would, somewhere in the very heart of the Americas, build a new city, which should be greater, richer and more powerful than Seville itself. And they had kept their word. Scarcely ten years had passed since then, and the new city they had founded, Ciudad Real de Nueva Granada, young though it was, and not yet grown to full stature, could still to-day be counted among the proudest cities of the western Indies. Juana, who with her very own eyes had seen the royal city grow, and who, rightly or wrongly, assigned to herself no less a rôle than that of princess of Nueva Granada, never grew weary of expatiating on the splendours of this veritable capital. It was a city of monuments, it seemed; its civil population equalled the military: it had ramparts, forts, fortresses, a citadel, a donjon, government buildings and palaces, magnificent residences encrusted with coats of arms, chapels, convents, seminaries, basilicas, a cathedral, and a sumptuous mansion where the bishop lodged. The streets were well-paved and at all times clean and shining. The houses, always newly painted, glowed under the clear American sunshine, their fresh colours taking on the silken texture that the sunlight of Old Spain brings out in the draperies and hangings spread over the balconies on solemn feast-days. Roundabout the city bloomed skilfully cultivated gardens, their succulent fruits unequalled in the whole

wide world, and nowhere could such lavish harvests be found as those produced by the wide fertile fields spreading their verdure for miles beyond the city walls. Great herds too pastured in the undulating meadowlands—indeed, compared with these wide savannahs, the pastures of France were but as deserts and swamps!

And how should the sovereign princess—if she wasn't exactly that, she came very close to being such a personage—of so rich a patrimony as this fail to look down upon a rustic, a coarse sailor like Thomas Trublet, sprung from a poor barren province perpetually drowning in fog and rain? What ancestors had he save his exploits? So convinced was Juana that her proud talk must have made a breech in the Corsair's stubborn will, that now and then she would pause in the midst of some stupendous account of her native glories, to say, harping ever on the same string she had plucked on the very first day of the contest with her captor:

"You see what a ransom you are losing, fool! Come, take me back to Ciudad Real. You can count on the generosity of my family. . . . Count on their vengeance too if you will not!"

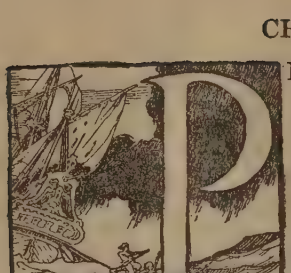
But always, at this point, into the Corsair's eyes, glowering under the bushy arch of his eyebrows, would flash so savage a gleam that the girl, suddenly intimidated in spite of her boasting, did not dare even to finish her sentence. But she had her revenge, inevitably, sooner or later. And then it was Thomas who bent his head and retreated before his prisoner. Oddly enough, he always found Juana to be strongest at those moments when he had assumed she would be most defenceless.

Almost every night now, tortured by sleeplessness, Thomas Trublet left his cabin, and, barely clothed, paced the deck under the soft summer stars. The heat of the tropics knows no mercy, and its intensities are as fearful between night and morning as during the burning day. And so, abandoning his suffocating cabin, he would

wander from poop to forecastle in search of the relief a stray night breeze might afford. But in vain! The dead calm hung with crushing weight over the whole motionless extent of the sea. Thick spirals of heavy scents from trees and flowers on shore crept out over the water, and mingling with the motionless air that was as thick as fog, made it heavier still, almost too heavy to breathe. His nerves on fire, Thomas would move about restlessly for a time, staring, now at the silent unmoving ocean, or the dark mass of the land, and now at the glittering sky, where the myriad stars of the Milky Way streamed like a great river of fine pearls between banks of jewels. And then the Corsair would feel the burning lava of the night pour through his veins. Abruptly, he would plunge into the poop-castle, and, with the resolute manner of one who has made a decision, throw open the door of the cabin where Juana lay sleeping. . . .

But the sleeping Juana slept on. And Thomas, stopping short at sight of this unconscious repose which some mysterious power forced him to respect, would stand motionless on the threshold, not daring to advance by a single step. On the disordered bed the girl's tempting body lay unprotected, and often more than half-exposed. Her round breast rose and fell with her even breathing, her red lips pouted. And at times her limbs were stretched far out over the bed in attitudes as seductive as they were ingenuous. But Thomas, vanquished, mastered by the unknown god protecting this imperilled virginity, would then close the door he had thrown open, and return, stealthily, to his own bed.

## CHAPTER V



ROFOUNDLY astonished were the inhabitants of La Tortue one fine evening to behold a skiff rowed by a single oarsman, approaching the beach with rapid strokes. Promptly, knots of townsfolk gathered here and there along the quays, for it was plain to see the boatman was not one of the Indian fishermen who furnished the colony with such delicacies as deep-sea tortoises and manatees. Nor did the skiff resemble the native pirogas that were fashioned from the trunk of a mahogany tree. Leaping ashore, the oarsman hauled his boat up on the beach with one or two vigourous pulls, and made off at a rapid pace toward the town. And then it was that, from a nearer view, the assembling crowd recognized Thomas Trublet.

For six long weeks he had remained in solitude aboard his frigate, not leaving it even to go ashore for fresh provisions, but subsisting stoically on the salted food of the ship's larder or on whatever supplies of fish and game the food-mongers ventured to bring out to the anchored frigate. For six long weeks the deck of the *Belle Hermine* had, apparently, been ample enough for all the activities of the Corsair whose tireless wanderings during four years, the whole wide sea of the Antilles had scarcely sufficed to contain. And there is no doubt that, after so many labours, Thomas Trublet would have continued to enjoy this rest, and would have been content never to set foot on shore up to the very last day of his exile, if the

disdain and harsh words to which his prisoner Juana treated him had not ended by exasperating him sorely. The rage that filled him at his countless rejections spilled over at last. He must have a wider field, a field ample enough for the innumerable goings and comings, the furious marches and counter-marches, in which to spend his energies and thereby find some measure of relief.

And thus it came about that the Filibusters and other folk of the island saw Thomas Trublet that evening and on subsequent evenings plunging hither and yon in every direction through town and countryside, climbing to the very summit of the hillock along the flanks of which nestled the hunting and pleasure lodges of the most notable inhabitants. At times, he would push on even farther, plunging into the very depths of the wild forests on the north side of the island, into a wilderness unbroken by ploughed fields or plantations of any sort. And at all times, Thomas kept up the same rapid, abrupt pace, and on everyone turned the same strange gaze, like that of a man bereft of his senses, or else caught in the strangling net of some wild vision. Only when the night had deepened to thick blackness did he cease his feverish surveying of underbrush and woodland, and exhausted rather than at peace, make his way back to the beach, there to untie his skiff, pull it down to the water's edge, and row off toward his sea-borne home. . . .

Thomas was starting on one of these expeditions one day when, just as he was leaving the last houses of the port behind him, and beginning to trudge along the sloping streets of the upper town, someone, issuing from a low, wide house with a painted sign, broke out into loud cries of astonishment at sight of him.

"Hurrah! Is that you, old comrade? *Damnée Mère de Dieu!* May the Grand Cric eat me alive if my eyes deceive me, and if this isn't my good Coast Brother and one-time shipmate Thomas Trublet, right here under my nose! Hurrah! Such a meeting asks for a health.

. . . Come in, brother Thomas, come into the tavern and give me my fill of answers before I burst!"

And thus did Thomas come upon Edward Bonny.

The English Filibuster was not, it seemed, prosperous as of yore, to judge by his attire . . . his breeches were fantastically pieced through length and breadth, his doublet so worn that no one could have discovered its original colour. But Redbeard was at no pains to conceal his poverty, due to a cause that did him sufficient honour, God's truth! At once, with many details and sonorous bursts of laughter, he related how his *Flying King* had perished in shipwreck, disembowelled on a reef off Manzanilla point, and how the Spaniards of Colon, whom he had formerly put to ransom—and a pretty sum he had exacted too!—had basely avenged themselves by massacring every man of the shipwrecked crew to fall into their hands. He alone, of the whole ship's company, had escaped, naked as an angleworm, and had, through God knows what dangerous passes, made his way back to La Tortue. For a month now he had been living there, with not a penny to his name, or other property than the ill-assorted garments on his back; yet he was as jovial, as resolute—in a word, as much the Filibuster as ever he had been.

"These Castillian monkeys will pay me well for my beloved brigantine, and pay my good Coast Brothers even better!" he roared, bringing his great palm down with a heavy smack on Thomas's shoulder. "Sailor-boy, my word on it, for every comrade slaughtered, this knife of mine will slit the throat of ten of those niggers, and for every plank of my good ship's hull, I'll squeeze no less than a pound of gold from their dirty guts!"

Whereupon both Redbeard and Thomas turned into the tavern, in front of which a sign, in the form of an iron weathercock, was cheerfully squeaking at each puff from the south wind. It was very hot, and "the roads were good" as sea folk say when their gullets are dry.

On the table which Redbeard had just left stood two empty wine jugs in proof that the Filibuster had been making a valiant attempt to overcome said dryness. But the two additional jugs he promptly ordered bore witness to the fact that he considered this first attempt far from adequate. And in a twinkling these jugs too became dry as wells in the dog-days.

"And you now, brother Thomas?" the Filibuster continued. "How's business with you? I know you're as rich as I am poor, and good brave comrade that you are, I wish you well of it. I know too that a while ago you sent your lieutenant and crew to Europe with a fine prize. More power to your arm for that! But what news since? Is it true, as the folk hereabout tell me, that you're living alone on your *Belle Hermine*, the better to savour the love and tender caresses of a fine slip of a girl you're holding there, it is whispered, as your slave? If so, no need to blush for it, my lad, and here's a health to you! There's no one alive who understands such tender passions better than your rough old Redbeard! Of that I'll show you a fine proof and presently!"

At which, without giving Thomas time to put in a single word in reply, he got up, rushed to the tavern door, and gave a rapid glance up and down the street. Evidently, he caught sight of what he was seeking, for at once he began to roar out, fit to burst his throat:

"Hello! Rack, old pal, here, sonny! Come around, clew up your sails, top and lower, and cast anchor at this very door! For I'm emptying tankards here in company with a Coast Brother o' mine, I want you to meet, and you'll love him for love o' me."

He came back followed by a fine strip of a lad, who had neither beard on his chin nor down on his lips. As the boy drew near the table he threw down his hat, uncovering a fine mop of fair hair, which he wore quite long, and ungreased, letting it hang free over neck and shoulders.

"*Hola!*" cried the newcomer in turn, in a fresh young voice, somewhat hoarse. "*Hola*, Bonny, old mate! Are you drunk so early and without me? You'll itch for it, old brute! And who's this man?"

"This man, here, Rack, my boy, is that Thomas you have often heard me mention, Thomas Trublet himself, and he . . ."

"And he certainly doesn't need an old gossip like you to add anything to his reputation! Hold your tongue ere it wag out of your mouth altogether, *tripes de Dieu!* Captain Thomas, your hand! By Mary's faith, but I love you already, and I am your true servant!"

"*Servante*"—was the word the newcomer had used. And thus to his amazement, Thomas learned that his friend Redbeard's sailor-lad was a woman.

She was scarcely twenty, yet for many a season now Mary Rackham had been coursing the seas. No novice was she in the handling of either ships or weapons. Brave, and even, at times, as savage as the fiercest of the Filibusters, she always dressed in man's clothes; yet, for the sake of certain advantages deriving therefrom, as well as through natural inclination, she remained every inch a woman, marked by all the passion, ardour, weaknesses, and capriciousness of womankind the world over. Not even a minute elapsed before Thomas was made acquainted with this fact, for turning on Redbeard, she began upbraiding him furiously, and with the most appalling blasphemies, for having made sheep's-eyes at some servant or other in the tavern. No less than a hundred thousand knife-thrusts did she promise him, and in the belly too, should said servant presume to reward said glances by so much as a single smile.

"Eh, what's that to you?" said Redbeard, with a great laugh. "Are you then my lawful wife, and have I ever sworn to be faithful to you, that you should thus play at jealousy?"

In a flash Mary Rackham unsheathed the knife stuck

in her belt and threw it on the table, the point driving two good inches into the wood.

"What's that to me, you say?" she returned, her upper lip curling and showing her white teeth. "Just this! That I need no vows from a man, nor Latin from a monk, to help me keep what is mine! And this shall vouch for it!"

She pointed to the knife planted upright in the hard oak of the table.

Gallantly, Thomas grasped the weapon to return it to its owner. But no less than all his strength was required to get it out at the first pull, so vigourous had been the lady's thrust.

"*Peste!*" said he then, admiringly. "There's nothing slow about that hand of yours. I'd be glad to have the help of this little fist, the next time I board a ship!"

Flattered, Redbeard's mistress gave Thomas a stinging slap on the back.

"*Tripedieu!*" said she. "May that boarding-party come soon! It will be welcome indeed if so be we are fighting side by side! Captain Thomas, I've told you that you suited me, and what I say once, I hold to. . . . Hark ye, then. When I deceive this swine of a Bonny . . . and for sure, that will be soon, for the Devil must have made me drunk or blind on the evil day when I took such a brute for a lover! . . . when I deceive him, I say, if so be you chance to carry sail in my waters, and are within cannon-shot, you'll be my choice, yes, you, Thomas Trublet, rather than any other bully blackguard on the whole coast!"

And to this Redbeard responded with such roars of laughter that he came very near to choking.

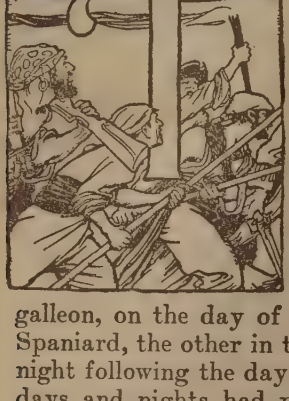
From this day on, Thomas gave up the solitary walks that had, indeed, afforded him but little satisfaction. Better diversions by far were to be found in the society of the jolly Filibuster and his warrior-mistress, and in that of diverse other Adventurers, who, like Redbeard,

were out at pocket and elbows, and haunted all the taverns of the island, there to drink up whatever credit still remained to them. At one after another of these resorts, this strangely assorted crew of the most extraordinary and dissimilar beings, drained their wine-cups, *pêle-mêle*, and elbow to elbow. Among them Thomas Trublet noticed particularly a Frenchman of the isle of Oléron in Aunis, a fellow who, brought up in the Reformed Church so-called—and right impudent is the presumption—still maintained a prudishness of manner strongly smelling of hypocrisy. This notwithstanding, he was as brave and daring as any Catholic. Another Frenchman there was—from Dieppe in Normandy, so monstrously fat and clumsy that anyone would have said, from looking at him, that there could not be an ounce of manhood in him. Yet let but a blow be struck, and he was more prompt than anyone to strike back, especially when the odds demanded that ten blows be given for every one received. A third member of this jolly company surpassed in singularity even these two. A Venetian, this last, a gentleman, so he claimed, taking to himself the title "Ser," in proof thereof. Descended from a patrician family—even ducal it was, by his own account—he gave himself out as a Loredano, and the name, that of one of the Doges, singularly became the rare beauty of his visage, the delicacy of his hands, and the proud, supple grace of his walk. Prince, or rustic, this Loredano was a true Filibuster, and one of the best, although, unlike the Norman from Dieppe, or the Huguenot from Oléron, or nearly all the rest of the merry crew, he was not born of sailor folk, and had taken to seafaring only after reaching manhood. No less a talent than that of the Sieur de Scudéry could do justice to the romantic history of his childhood and youth. Scarcely a calling existed that Loredano the Filibuster had not at some time turned his hand to, scarcely a position of all those occupied by man was there that he had not at some time filled, nor an ad-

venture he had not experienced, whether on land, or sea, in camps, cities, or in the courts of Kings, wherever, in short, due honour is paid to a good sword ever prompt to leap from the scabbard.

These folk and many others beside became henceforth Thomas Trublet's daily companions. He continued to live on board the *Belle Hermine*, and continued there each day to endure the haughty discourse and scornful rebuffs of Mistress Juana, the Sevillian; but every evening, in his skiff, he went ashore, there to rejoin, in some tavern or other of the town, the band of idle Filibusters, and there to drink with them, and pass the time in merriment, or seemingly so. Not one of his companions ever suspected that Thomas—Thomas Trublet, king of Corsairs—could have the slightest reason for being anything less than the happiest of mortals, still less that he sought in wine and rum to drown his memory of the harsh treatment inflicted on him by the girl he held captive on his frigate. Never did it enter the minds of these Adventurers—not very sensitive folk, any of them, and little inclined to submit to the rule of any woman—that this captive of his could fail to be the very humble servant of such a brave warrior as Thomas Trublet, or fail to submit to the slightest caprices of her master, whether amourous or otherwise. Measureless would have been their amazement had anyone told them the truth!

## CHAPTER VI



TWICE already had Thomas Trublet assailed the virtue, pretended or honest of his prisoner Juana. And twice had he been repulsed in truly vigourous fashion—so vigourous, indeed, that he put off and postponed making a third attempt, and week after week went by. The two first attacks had taken place within an interval of but a few hours, one on board the galleon, on the day of the boarding and capture of the Spaniard, the other in the cabin of the *Belle Hermine* the night following the day of battle. Since then, a hundred days and nights had passed, for it was now three full months since Louis Guénolé had set sail from the harbor of La Tortue, taking with him all Captain Thomas Trublet's crew, and leaving Thomas Trublet alone, or almost alone, on his disarmed frigate.

A hundred days and nights; during this time Thomas Trublet, in daily contest with his prisoner, had a hundred and two hundred times felt his flesh exasperated to the point of frenzy by his desire of her; and one hundred and two hundred times had he suffered the affront of being repulsed, and had suffered hot anger at the innumerable humiliations and insults she had heaped upon him. Nevertheless, Thomas Trublet still contained himself, swallowing both his rage and his desire, and, like the good tactician that he was, making use of every resource within reach of his patience. For, in his next attack, he wished to fight only when assured of victory, convinced that a third defeat would be decisive, or, at best, would

require some prodigious effort on his part to overcome its effects.

Obviously, brute force could always overcome the resistance of a mere woman, especially of one as yet little better than a child. But, in spite of having in the first instance determined upon employing it, and in spite of having threatened to make short work of the girl's resistance, Thomas hesitated to carry out his threats. It is one thing to take a girl by force in the fury and rage of battle, in the midst of a captured city or on the deck of a grappled ship; but it is quite another matter coldly to lash the same girl to her bed and thus at leisure take advantage of her helplessness. Moreover, Thomas was all the less disposed to employ belated violence against her in that the prisoner's pride was such as to make him fear the worst consequences might result from plunging that pride into the depths of humiliation. More than once had Juana sworn that she would not long survive what she pompously called her "dishonour." And Thomas believed her capable indeed of putting an end to herself, if for no other reason than not to belie her words.

Yet the day came inevitably, in spite of delays and postponements, the day of the third battle. And Thomas Trublet, who had bided his time, so as not to engage in combat before the propitious hour, or before every advantage should lie with him, in one single moment lost the profit of twelve patient weeks, and yielding suddenly to his exasperation, ceased for the time being to calculate the odds of victory, and abandoned everything to chance.

It was during one of his ceremonious conversations with Juana, in the course of which she employed a thousand forms of insolence the further to irritate him, that he suddenly gave way. Once more, the interminable chapter of the splendours of Ciudad Real of New Granada had been begun by his tormentor. With infinite complacence and immeasurable vanity, Juana, expatiating on the magnificence of the city, and speaking of it as

though it were a fief of her royal domain, suddenly declared that he, the ruffian Thomas, could easily enough convince himself of the reality of these glories that so far surpassed anything else in the wide world.

"*Voire!*" said Thomas, not seeing at first the drift of her discourse. "*Voire!* And how might that be?"

"By seeing this fine city of mine with your own eyes," said she.

They spoke using the familiar "*tu*" now, but this manner of speech was in Thomas's mouth but the sailor's custom, for he was bred of a long line of sailing men, who had never treated the wives and daughters of fellow-sailors with much ceremony; whereas Juana in her familiarity of speech, affected the disdain of one of noble birth addressing a rustic, or of a master giving orders to a lackey.

But Thomas still continued his questioning.

"How then should I see it with my own eyes?" said he.

"How?" Her lip curled. "When my father, my brother, and my betrothed come to free me and take you back as a prisoner to Ciudad Real, there to hang you from the gallows before the city gate."

But Thomas was not the man to be disturbed by an empty threat, and Juana grew angry at seeing him unmoved.

"Do you believe then," said she, "that if they haven't come here already, it is because of fear of you and your like? If they but knew where I was, they'd make quick work of coming after me, and you'd soon be in their power, though they should have to conquer the whole of Tortuga to take you prisoner."

But Thomas only laughed. Vexed, the girl clenched her fists.

"You dare doubt it?" she hissed, in a cold rage. "Bah! low cutpurse that you are, you do well and prudently to hide me here, and to skulk in hiding too, thinking to escape the vengeance of my family!"

But Thomas, still laughing, merely shrugged. "Little enough hiding about it," said he. "All America knows I am here, on my own frigate, and that I am alone. My enemies have but to come to me."

Juana gave a shrug likewise.

"Do you think yourself so great a personage," she inquired, mockingly, "that everyone knows where you are, even before you have announced your whereabouts to the world? Come, cease your lying now. If your enemies, as you presume to call them, came to look for you here, who would protect you against them, tell me that! Would it perhaps be your Virgin who comes . . . who knows from where? from the gutter more than likely . . . a fit Virgin, yes, for heretics and dogs, and sleeping nightly with the Devil, I'll be bound!"

Such blasphemy was more unendurable to Thomas than a thousand insults would have been. "Hold your tongue!" he commanded, in sudden anger. "My Virgin—and you are not worthy even to kneel before her—is certainly of as much worth as your gipsy Brunette, who can sleep with anyone she chooses, but just the same, she didn't prevent you, did she? from falling into my hands?"

Beside herself at this speech, the prisoner bounded to her feet.

"Hold your tongue yourself, you blasphemous cur!" she fairly howled at him. "My Brunette saved something better than myself from your hands when she saved my honour from you, and forced you to respect it in spite of all your brutish wantonness, in spite of all the help of your lecherous Virgin, filthy strumpet that she is!"

On Thomas Trublet, already lashed to fury, this outrage struck with the explosive force of a trigger released in a loaded musket. In the instant his rage burst into the frenzy of the male beast. It was in that moment that he lost all the slowly won gain of twelve weeks.

Juana stood, mocking and insulting, hands on her hips, winning back all her coolness in proportion as Thomas

was losing his. He saw her in the insolent posture of a woman who, out of sheer bravado, offers herself, knowing the man she is facing will not dare to take her. Thus defied, Thomas dared. He flung himself upon her, as twice before he had done. And so quickly that he threw her upon the bed, and fell upon her before she could defend herself. But it is not so easy for a man to get the better of a woman who is fighting in dead earnest unless he be resolved upon cruel brutalities. And Thomas was evidently not so resolved, for at the first cry of pain uttered by the enemy he let go, relaxing the grip of his fingers that were bruising two fragile wrists, and holding back the weight of his knee, about to crush the girl's slim body. Now in these contests of male and female, it is fatal to retreat. Having won this first respite, Juana knew how to win others. No sooner did she feel that her position was growing perilous than she screamed as though being flayed alive, thus causing her aggressor, almost paralyzed by her shrieks, to lose little by little all the advantage he had gained. In a battle so tenaciously disputed, there can be little doubt of the outcome. Within four minutes Thomas sprang up, definitely put to rout, in full retreat. Juana, scarcely escaped from his grip, sprang to her feet almost at the same instant. She had been frightened this time. But victory brought back her earlier audacity. She burst into a strident laugh.

"Didn't I tell you," she cried, "didn't I tell you that your Virgin, your Virgin of the streets and ditches, couldn't prevail against my Brunette of the Macareña? . . . my Brunette, who will preserve my honour against all such as you! This very instant, I make her a vow to give her, just as soon as I return to Ciudad Real, a fine dress all of cloth of gold!"

Thomas was already crossing the threshold. But as these words reached his ears, he turned on his heel as though stung by a viper.

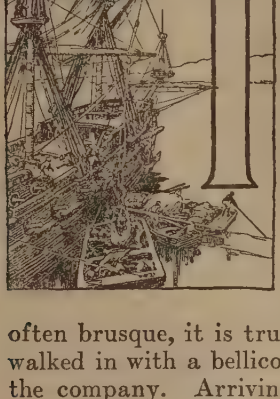
"*Pardieu!*" said he between clenched teeth, "Amen. I'll answer for that vow. I'll pay for your Brunette's dress of gold! But your Brunette will bear me no grudge if, to make the bargain square, I move her into another chapel!"

Open-mouthed and astounded, Juana suddenly ceased her raillery.

"And besides"—Thomas Trublet continued, and it was his turn now to burst out laughing—"and besides, even if the Brunette does bear me a grudge, the Vierge de la Grand' Porte will know well how to get a pardon for me!"

And he slammed the cabin door.

## CHAPTER VII



IN the tavern known as the "Sign of the Dancing Tortoise," where Edward Bonny, Mary Rackham, his mistress, Loredano the Venetian, the Filibuster d'Oléron, the Dieppois, and diverse other Adventurers, all persons of importance, were drinking that evening, Thomas Trublet's sudden arrival caused a sensation. For, instead of displaying his usual manner, often brusque, it is true, but peaceable, Thomas Trublet walked in with a bellicose gait, casting savage glances at the company. Arriving at a bench, he tumbled into it rather than sat down and catching sight of a fresh-drawn jug of wine, seized upon it and drained it at a draught all without even a "*Dieu garde*" in greeting to anyone. Astonished, the Filibusters interrupted their own drinking to gaze in silence at the new arrival.

Thomas, having drunk, with a furious blow smashed the wine jug against the table.

"What now?" ventured Mary Rackham, more prompt at speech than the men.

But Thomas gave no answer. Perhaps he had not heard.

"Brothers of the Coast!" he shouted all of a sudden, sweeping them all with a glance that glittered like a lightning flash, "Brothers of the Coast! Aren't you as sick as I am of wearing out your breeches on these tavern benches, and of emptying your money bags without knowing when you are going to fill them up again? If so,

you're my men, and I'm yours! Here! Drain your cups and clear the table. Listen to me now, all of you. Who of you is willing, with me as captain, to sign a division of spoils for such a hunting party as will make us rich for the rest of our lives, please God and our patron saints?"

In a twinkling the dead silence that had greeted the first part of this speech was changed into a wild tumult. Leaping to their feet as though released by a spring, the Filibusters were howling with enthusiasm and brandishing their guns, from which—such was their custom—they parted as little in the tavern as on the field of battle. For full five minutes the commotion was such that not a word there spoken could be distinguished.

Finally, Mary Rackham's piercing voice rose above the din.

"Hurrah!" cried she. "*Tripes de Dieu!* Captain Thomas, in this adventure I will be your very own sailor —unless you say me nay—and follow you wherever you go, through life, through death, and to the very pit of Hell!"

A chorus of roars and oaths from the others, approving. Thomas, who remembered and with pride, how the crew of his very own *Belle Hermine* made a similar uproar in the hour immediately preceding each of his victories, once more felt his heart swell with the joy of warfare and victory. It was only after a long pause that he brought his great fist down on the table as a sign that he desired silence, and having obtained it:

"Which one of you," said he, "knows either by hearsay, or from having himself travelled in those parts, a certain city of New Granada, called by the name of Ciudad Real?"

"I," said Loredano the Venetian, rising from his bench. As he was in the far end of the tavern, he drew nearer, and sat down again at the same table with Captain Thomas, who joyously slapped the fellow's thigh.

"So, Brother Loredano, you know this Ciudad Real of New Granada?"

"By St. Mark and his Lion, that I do!" replied the Venetian. "And moreover, not at all by hearsay, but from having been there in my own person, I, Ser Loredano of Venice, and Filibuster to boot."

"*Pardieu!*" swore Thomas, overjoyed, "you're the very pilot we need! Come, comrade, tell us what you know of this city, reputed so magnificent. And you, Brothers of the Coast, do you listen with both ears, every man of you. For I tell you now, it is this very Ciudad Real that I mean to take by storm, and put to fire and sword!"

A thunderous burst of applause broke out on the instant. Few of the Filibusters knew just what Ciudad Real might be, but they had all heard it spoken of as being a rich city, and hence, they reasoned, a good choice for plunder.

Loredano, however, bided his time until the general commotion had subsided. Whereupon he spoke. "As to Ciudad Real of New Granada, I know all that may be known," said he, in his customary gentle and even tone. "Every street of it I know, and every square, and every gateway, by its right name, but that is not all. Many a time have I visited its ramparts, forts, fortresses, and the castle, and donjon-keep. For it was not as a mere traveller that I was there, content to arrive, look about and go my way again; I have lived in this city, in fact I was once a citizen of this Ciudad Real, and even I have been an officer in the garrison which the King of Spain maintains at the 'Royal City.'"

Astonishing as this last news was, not a Filibuster turned a hair. For the Filibusters, having, in their joint experience, seen everything, and done everything, would not have deemed it in any wise extraordinary that one of their number should, in the past, have filled even so unlikely a role as that of officer in the service of the Spanish King. Thomas Trublet alone raised his eye-

brows at this part of the Venetian's speech, but Loredano was not at all disturbed by this sign of doubt.

"This then," he continued in tranquil fashion, "is what at present we need to know on the subject of Ciudad Real, a well-garrisoned stronghold, capable of resisting a regular siege for several months. In order to capture it according to the rules of war, a fleet is indispensable, and, indeed an army. The fleet should number eight or ten ships of the line, for on the sea-front of the town eight or ten good batteries, and of the latest style, are to be reckoned with, and each of these is as good as one ship at least to the defendants. So much for the fleet. The army must consist of at least six thousand men, for there are more than three thousand in the garrison, each one of which, fighting from behind fortified walls, is worth two men fighting in the open. So much for the army. As to the rest, Ciudad Real is surrounded by a great rampart, with bastions, curtains, semi-lunes, a moat fifteen feet deep, and chemises seven feet thick. Outside are redoubts to the number of ten. These and the ramparts being carried by assault, the besieging force would then come upon five fortified convents, making a second line of fortification. The twenty-four hundred monks in the convent make a second garrison, for the Governor representing His Catholic Majesty has given them eight hundred muskets and sixteen hundred pikes. I was there when these arms were distributed. Once the convents are captured, there remains the citadel or castle, with a high donjon in the centre of it, flanked by four watch-towers. Here, fifty men could hold five hundred at bay, giving time to the captain-general of the vice-kingdom to come to the rescue from Sainte-Foi de Bogotà, bringing with him the twenty thousand soldiers he there commands. For from Sainte-Foi to Ciudad Real it is less than a hundred leagues."

Whereupon Loredano, having made this lengthy speech, nonchalantly laid his hand on his hip and stood silent.

A murmur among the Filibusters. The greatness of the danger to be encountered could not, of course, dismay them. But in front of such an accumulation of obstacles, several of them, after calculating the number of the forces available, began to grow doubtful of the success of the enterprise.

Then Thomas Trublet raised his voice in speech. And so calm, so cold was this voice of his that it sounded exactly as though Thomas Trublet had not heard a single word of the redoubtable information given by Loredano.

"Brother," said Thomas Trublet, "brother Loredano, you say naught of the things that alone can interest us. *Ça!* . . . Let me question you then. . . . Is it true, as I have heard it affirmed, that Ciudad Real is numbered among the richest cities of the Americas?"

"*Certes!*" replied Loredano.

"Is it true that its churches, chapels, convents, and other buildings of like pious nature are full of statues and images that are for the most part made of gold, or of solid silver?"

"It is true."

"Is it likewise true that there are to be found in Ciudad Real vast warehouses, gorged with rich ingots, and also rubies, garnets, emeralds, agates, bezoars, and other precious stones, and likewise coral, cochineal, indigo, tobacco, sugar, ambergris, dye-woods, leathers, cacao, and chocolate?"

"As you say."

"And true also that in this city, the very burghers are richer than the aldermen, merchants, and notables of other cities?"

"It is a fact that cannot be doubted."

With both fists Thomas Trublet struck the table.

"*Eh donc!*" cried he, with great joy, "why the devil do you talk of ramparts, curtains, semi-lunes, bastions, and strongholds? Where in the world have you ever found Filibusters who gave heed to such trifles? *Vive*

*Dieu!* Listen to me, all of you! By the Christ of the Ravelin and his Holy Mother I hereby swear that, since Ciudad Real is rich, Ciudad Real shall be ours though I should perish on its threshold!"

Of all the Filibusters present, not one drew back—not one declined the honour of accompanying Thomas Trublet in the expedition that Thomas Trublet had decided upon, and which promised to be one of the boldest ever undertaken by Filibusterdom. At the tavern of the Dancing Tortoise twenty-six braves were assembled, and everyone of them signed, within that very hour, and with great enthusiasm, a hunting agreement, in due form, and such that not even a man of law could have written it out in fairer hand. For Thomas Trublet dictated it word for word to Loredano, and the latter, who knew how to write—he knew almost everything—set it out in very legible characters. The document remained for three days then on the table of the cabaret, Thomas's own poignard and the Venetian's stiletto holding it fast to the board—two mettlesome nails in sooth! And thus every Filibuster on the island could at leisure listen to the reading of it, for there were plenty of good people who were scholars enough to spell it out, and willingly, once and again to all comers. And so many times was it read, that on the evening of the third day, when Trublet and Loredano came to pull out their knives and take up the document, they found a hundred and sixteen names fairly inscribed thereon, and in addition two hundred and twenty crosses, the whole being worth three hundred and thirty-six good men, some knowing, and some not, how to write their names, but every man of them well-skilled in handling a battle-axe. The flower of the Filibusters had joined in a body, full of enthusiasm both for the leader of the expedition and the campaign he had planned.

The agreement Thomas had dictated as follows, eager to combine the customs of adventuring with his own interests as Malouin sea captain, and furthermore, with

certain mysterious projects that he nursed concerning the city so much vaunted by Juana his prisoner, and concerning certain of its inhabitants. And in this wise had Thomas dictated, and Loredano written, the compact:

ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT

*The Brothers of the Coast signing these presents agree to lead against Ciudad Real of New Granada an expedition under the command of Thomas Trublet, Captain, and General, his lieutenants being Edward Bonny, known as Redbeard, Loredano the Venetian, the Adventurer from Dieppe, the Adventurer d'Oléron, Mary Rackham, the Woman Corsair, and such others as may be chosen. Of these Thomas Trublet will elect, at his good pleasure, a Vice-Commander of the Fleet, and a Second in Command, and will himself be the General of the Land Army when it disembarks.*

*The fleet is to comprise the frigate Belle Hermine, and all other ships captured on the way to Ciudad Real. Said frigate being contributed by the General, and not being the common property of the allied Filibusters, it is hereby agreed that the first ship captured shall be awarded to the General, as compensation for his risk, with two shares in addition to his own, as his part of the booty.*

*The lieutenants are to have each two shares in each prize, and for distinguished service, a reward shall be assigned them by common consent.*

*The surgeon is to have two thousand crowns for his medicine coffer.*

*The carpenter, a thousand crowns for the trouble of careening.*

*The first man to kill one of the enemy, a thousand crowns.*

*The first man to scale the ramparts of the city, a thousand crowns.*

*Whoever takes down the Spanish flag from a fortress*

*and runs up the French flag in its stead or that of St. Malo, is to have a thousand crowns.*

*The maimed are to be recompensed as follows:*

*For the loss of an eye, a thousand crowns.*

*For the loss of both eyes, six thousand.*

*For the loss of an arm or a hand, fifteen hundred.*

*For the loss of both, four thousand.*

*For the loss of a leg, two thousand.*

*For the loss of both, six thousand.*

*Let it here be noted that these sums, eight and ten times in excess of those customary are assigned by reason of the magnitude and peril of the enterprise. All special recompenses are to be paid from the booty, before the allotment of shares, which shall then be distributed, in as many lots as this agreement demands.*

*The General is to provide powder and cannon at his own expense, and is to receive two shares in addition to his own.*

*Once the city is captured, no Adventurer is to take from the general booty either money or slaves. But any Adventurer encountering personal enemies among the prisoners, may with his own hands kill them, if he so choose.*

*By reason of which, we, the following, have signed, and take our oath to be, until the victory is won, good and loyal Brothers of the Coast.*

On board the *Belle Hermine*, Juana the Spanish maid was much astonished to hear, on the very next day, the great noise made by the embarking Filibusters, who were already beginning to stow away in the hold all that might be of use in once more arming the frigate. Too proud to show her curiosity, and unwilling either to try with her own eyes to see what was going on, or to question anyone, Juana waited, with what patience she could, for Thomas Trublet's accustomed visit, certain that she could learn all that she wished to know from the Corsair's own lips.

But events did not bear out her calculations. Neither on that day, nor on the following, did Thomas Trublet visit his captive. And when, a week later, the *Belle Hermine* weighed anchor amid the clamourous outcries of her new crew, Juana the prisoner, more prisoner now than ever, and—so to speak—in solitary confinement, knew neither how, nor why, nor whither the *Belle Hermine* was setting out, as it carried away in its flanks an invisible captain, unknown sailors, and a girl cruelly tormented by anxiety.

## CHAPTER VIII

OTH to starboard and larboard the coast seemed fairly near, guarded by a long line of reefs on which the sea broke into foam. Beyond the shore-line, cliffs reared their chalky walls, and behind these cliffs, far in the distance, great mountains bristled with many a sharp peak and abrupt declivity. In front the gulf ran into an estuary, and there a river poured out its waters, as one could surmise from the diverse low isles, like those which, near St. Malo, are formed by the accumulating ooze of the Rance. Two of these islands bore lofty geometrically shaped buildings, still too far away to be clearly recognizable. Beyond, other buildings appeared, blending still more confusedly with the land. But several steeples, surmounting them, indicated that these edifices were the city itself—Ciudad Real de Nueva Granada, reposing beside her river, the Rio Grande, just as Seville lies along the bank of her own Guadalquivir. . . . Thomas Trublet remembered this phrase of Juana's.

Alone, a frail craft, the *Belle Hermine* swept boldly on under swelling sails. Since leaving the Tortoise, not a prize had been taken. The frigate still contained intact her warlike cargo—three hundred and thirty-six Filibusters, all determined to conquer or perish. Of course, that was a goodly army, but all the same it was little enough considering the number of the enemy to be fought and the strength of the fortifications to be captured.

Thomas Trublet, counting on his fingers, measured the proportions of this and that, and calculated that each Adventurer would have forty or fifty of the enemy to dispose of. A similar calculation had caused him to hesitate on the day when he attacked the galleon. But the Thomas Trublet of those days and the Thomas Trublet now advancing upon Ciudad Real had little enough in common, and now, as he paced the poop-deck, measuring its length with abrupt steps, and staring straight before him with a sort of ferocious impatience, Thomas Trublet hesitated not at all, and even, he broke into a laugh now and then, a savage laugh, almost mad, in mockery of the perils he was about to defy.

" . . . Those stone structures"—Loredano spoke with his habitual nonchalance—"those stone structures that you see there, planted on the islands of the estuary, are fortresses intended to prevent hostile fleets from approaching Ciudad Real. There are six of them, and there are two good leagues of channel to traverse between the first and the last. The first one you see there, three points to larboard straight ahead, is called Fort St. Jerome. Strictly speaking, it is a walled battery, with a parapet—if I remember rightly—measuring five feet, and a glacis three and a half feet across. There are eight cannon there, gauged for twelve-, eight-, and six-pound shots, and there is a guard of fifty men. The second fortress, known as Fort Ste. Thérèsa, carries twenty pieces. It's a new fortification, with four bastions, and a dry moat. Besides the artillery, there are ten *jeux d'orgues*, each with twelve muskets and ninety rifles, two hundred grenades, powder, shot, and fuses in proportion. Then there are the batteries of Concepcion, and St. Sauveur . . ."

"Enough," interrupted Thomas Trublet. "We can take all those hovels, of course, but it's a long piece of business. Isn't there some other route than the channel

through the estuary that would lead us straight to the very moat of the citadel?"

"There may be," replied the Venetian, with indifference, "but I never heard of it."

All his lieutenants were pressing around Thomas—Redbeard, the Dieppois, d'Oléron, and Mary Rackham, the latter as usual accoutred like a man and swearing and blaspheming as much as any other four of the Filibusters put together.

Thomas, reflecting on his plans, and casting sharp rapid glances at the grey line of forts, came to a sudden decision, nor had he consulted with anyone.

"Prisoners!" said he, abruptly. "Prisoners! That's what we need. If the route we are looking for exists, we'll learn of it from them, or, *pardieu!* I'm not worth my name!"

Impetuously, he ran to the helm, and swung it around so that the *Belle Hermine* headed straight for St. Jerome.

"That fortress there won't hold out the length of a parley," said he. "The garrison has only fifty rifles, hardly enough to fill a tooth. If they surrender right away, we'll give them quarter. If they resist, we'll kill the vermin, save ten or twelve of the beggars who can serve us as guides."

"Supposing they refuse to talk?" inquired the Dieppois.

"*Tripes de Dieu!* If they won't talk we'll hang them—and not by their necks either," said Mary Rackham, with a loud laugh.

"They'll talk," said Thomas Trublet.

Once more the Brothers of the Coast had occasion to admire the seamanship of their captain and general. The frigate tacked, so accurately, that she ran in on the low tide to within two hundred yards of Fort St. Jerome, yet beyond the range of the Spanish cannon. A spit of sand

ran obliquely down to the sea northeast of the fort, and the embrasures of the eight pieces were not adjusted to allow of their being directed upon anything beyond this sand-spit. The *Belle Hermine* took up her post therefore in this sheltered zone, and a hundred Filibusters, designated by Thomas in advance, and commanded by him, were able in this fashion to reach the glacis of the battery without striking a blow.

The defenders rushed to their posts at the loopholes, and shot off their muskets, but lamely. For, at the first shot, the Adventurers, than whom there are no better marksmen in the world, replied in such fashion that every Spaniard whose head, even in the slightest degree, appeared above the wall, was laid low. Before more than four of them had fallen every man of the garrison began raising his musket above his head and firing without taking aim, so as not to expose his own hide. Their shots, thus delivered, offered no great risk to the Filibusters. Just the same, Thomas was irritated by even this feeble resistance. Leaping into the moat with twenty of his men, while the others covered them with a curtain of musket-shots, he jumped to the lads' shoulders, noiselessly scaled the wall, and, alone, jumped into the fort. The next instant, half of his men had joined him. Yet in the single instant that had elapsed, six Spaniards had fallen, stricken by the Corsair's boarding-pike. The survivors, yelling as though the very devil had seized them, threw down their arms. Most of the beggars were promptly despatched. Thomas, however, bethought himself in time of his need of prisoners, and caused a sufficient number to be spared. Eight men, their hands bound, were thereupon brought on board the frigate. The tide meanwhile had risen, and the *Belle Hermine* was already afloat, clear of the sand-spit, and ready to sail on to other victories.

But before bringing about, the Dieppois, who was taking his turn at the helm, came to ask Thomas which

course to take, since the fort had been occupied for no other reason than to have speech with the Spaniards, and learn from their lips which was the least difficult channel to follow. . . .

Now Thomas, as was usual with him, had emerged from the combat in a sombre fury. The resistance of the first moments had irritated him, and the cowardice of the enemy had transformed this irritation into downright anger. Finally, by scaling the wall, and himself taking part in the fight, he had overheated his blood, and the massacre which had followed, far from soothing his ferocity, had on the contrary excited it even to frenzy. It had not been without an effort that Thomas had stayed his hand in order to save from the carnage the eight prisoners who were to serve as guides.

No sooner, therefore, had the Dieppois asked which course to follow than Thomas, with a burst of laughter, his eyes glowing like two coals, thundered the order that the aforesaid prisoners were to be brought before him on the deck and lined up behind the mainmast, one beside the other. Then, catching sight of the Adventurer d'Oléron, who spoke as pure a Castillian as the Catholic King himself, he enjoined him to explain to the captives, as clearly as he could, the service expected of them—to wit, that they were to guide the army to the town, by a route out of range of the guns on the fortified islands.

And faithfully did d'Oléron carry out his orders. But no success followed his harangue. The prisoners, indeed, having looked at one another, declared as in one voice, that the service demanded of them was the one thing they could not do, inasmuch as the only practicable route for reaching Ciudad Real was none other than the channel of the stream, and this was commanded by the fire of the five remaining fortifications.

After hearing this reply, Mary Rackham turned with a malicious smile toward Thomas Trublet.

"Didn't I tell you, *tripedieu*, that they wouldn't talk?"

said she. "*Sus!* Have them strung up, and go ahead. You're only wasting time!"

But Thomas, fiery red, put a stop to her talk.

"Hold your tongue!" said he. "I told you they *would* talk, didn't I? Wait. . . ."

The prisoners looked anxiously at the captain. Without a word, he came straight toward the nearest of them, and bared his sword.

"*Ça!*" said Mary Rackham, with a sneering laugh, "do you think they can talk better when you've cut off their heads?"

But she had no time to say more for, under Thomas's blade, the first head, severed at a single blow, flew through the air like a stone from a sling-shot, and crashed, mangling at the impact, to the deck at Mary Rackham's very feet, spattering her with a shower of warm blood.

The seven Spaniards still alive howled with terror. And not without cause. Thomas, still silent, his face still purplish red, approached the second of the prisoners. Instinctively, the man recoiled, in an attempt to flee. But already, Thomas, with two rapid motions, had thrust his still dripping sword into the fellow's belly and breast. The Spaniard fell to the deck, stone dead.

The third, at this, shrieked "Mercy!" Deaf, as well as mute, Thomas, with a blow in which he put all the strength of his muscle from the waist up, split him in two from shoulder to navel. From the cleavage poured blood, bowels, and entrails. Curious, Thomas with the point of his sword searched in the horrid mass as though seeking something he could not find. Already the last tremor had left the corpse. Then he came to the fourth prisoner.

The latter had fallen to his knees, and all his companions with him. With no hope of mercy from this terrible executioner, they were hastily sending up their prayers to God.

Then Thomas, stopping in front of his fourth victim, instead of striking, put his sword back in the scabbard.

Trembling now with hope, the wretch raised his head. But his joy was short-lived.

"Rope!" commanded Thomas, opening his mouth at last.

Two Filibusters brought him a few strands unwound.

"Bind those legs and arms. Three double turns and a carrick bend!"

And thus they did.

"Now throw the bundle overboard."

The condemned man's groans were promptly smothered by the waves.

Of the eight prisoners, four still remained.

"This man here . . ." said Thomas, considering the first to die. . . .

He stopped short, turned his head, and looked at Mary Rackham:

"What was that you were saying a while ago?" said he, speaking to her—"that there was no good route leading to Ciudad Real?"

He turned on his heel, and from head to foot measured the Spaniard, already trembling with eagerness to speak.

"A good route?" repeated Thomas. "I shall know three or four such in a little while. But this fellow here doesn't know any, I'll be bound."

In Thomas's belt were two pistols. He grasped one, and raised it to the level of the prisoner's face.

"The route . . ." stammered the prisoner, almost dead already.

"He doesn't know any," repeated Thomas, and pulled the trigger.

Fragments of brain flew through the air.

"And this man either," began Thomas, advancing towards the next to the last.

The fellow was a mulatto, half-Castilian, half-Indian. He crawled on his belly.

"*Señor Capitán!*" he cried desperately. "*No me mateis! Yo os diré la verdad!*"

"*Bah!*" said Thomas, crossing his arms on his chest.

He was not looking at the mulatto, but at Mary Rackham.

"There is a route, a sure one," moaned the mulatto, still speaking Spanish, as if, in his terror, any language but his own, even the Filibusters' *patois*, understood in all the Americas, had been effaced from his memory.

"Didn't I tell you?" repeated Thomas, looking at Mary. "Didn't I tell you there was a route?"

"It follows the mountains to the west. . . . To twelve miles above the city, the Rio Grande is navigable. . . . When you've passed the ford from left to right bank, you can circle back to Ciudad Real through the savannah without any trouble."

"Doubtless this route might conceal men in ambush," continued Thomas, still talking to Mary Rackham.

"*Señor Capitán,* do not believe that!" cried the mulatto. "There is no ambush there! I speak the truth! . . ."

"But if there were an ambush," Thomas pursued, "it would be so much the worse for our three guides, for I'd flay them alive with my own knife."

"So be it, *Señor Capitán!*" cried the mulatto. "And if all goes well, you give us our lives!"

"So be it!" Thomas agreed.

He walked towards the woman Corsair, and struck her on the shoulder.

"Did they speak, yes or no? Now what have you to say?"

He was laughing, a convulsive and terrible laugh.

"*Tripes de Dieu!*" swore Mary Rackham, "it's a fine general we've got! Gentle as a lambkin, on my life!"

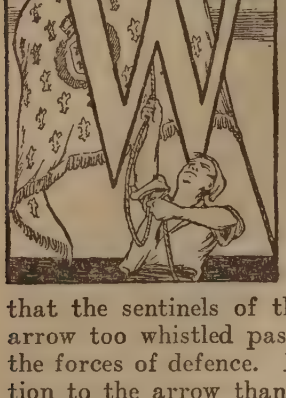
Twenty Filibusters caught up the word.

"Hurrah for Thomas the Lambkin . . . Thomas l'Agnelet!"

Still laughing the same terrible laugh, Thomas l'Agnelet opened his right hand, and held it out toward the Filibusters in acceptance of his new title.

"L'Agnelet? So be it!" said he. "L'Agnelet shall I be, henceforth. And now, *sus!* Larboard your helm, and head to the west. Let's take the lamb's wool to the wolf whelps of Ciudad Real!"

## CHAPTER IX



ITHIN two hundred yards of the rampart, Thomas Trublet—now known as Thomas the Lambkin—signalled to the scouting party he was leading, to stop. Raising himself to his full height in the tall grass, he walked forward for thirty paces in order to observe more accurately the enemy's position. Three musket-shots broke out one after the other, showing that the sentinels of the bastions were on watch. An arrow too whistled past, for there were Indians among the forces of defence. But Thomas paid no more attention to the arrow than to the shots. Ever scornful of danger, he was intent on carefully examining the front and side of the intrenchment, so that he might with good knowledge choose the point of attack.

The city of Ciudad Real de Nueva Granada was built on a plateau precipitous on all sides save the one facing the river. There a gentle slope extended toward a quay upon which the ships discharged their cargoes under the protection of several large batteries on a level with the stream, but covered with earthworks, and constituting the sea-front of the fortification. Above and below the quay two great fortresses faced the land-side, in a fashion using as battlements the very escarpment of the plateau which served as a pedestal for the city, while a semicircular rampart connected both forts. An assault made on any point of this well-constructed fortification could not help but be worse than hazardous.

In front of the moat rose a parapet, two yards high, traversed by stonework casemates. And various palisades cut off approach to the walls. Above the ramparts numerous batteries levelled their cannon in all directions. Above these batteries nothing but a few church steeples could be seen, so much higher were the walls of the fort than those of any of the houses or other edifices of the city.

Again three musket-shots. The sentinels had had time to load again. One of the balls dislodged a pebble within two paces of the impassible Thomas. Finally, having seen all he wished to see, he retreated with his scouts, while from afar the Spaniards in the casemates yelled insults after him, calling him a cur, and defying him to attack. As he walked calmly away he burst into a laugh.

Thanks to the prisoners taken at Fort St. Jerome—they had proved good guides—neither the landing on the left bank of the Rio Grande, nor the advance along the flank of the mountain, from north to south, nor the passage of the ford above the city, had presented the slightest difficulty. Only forty Filibusters, drawn by lot, had remained on board the *Belle Hermine*, which, to avoid attack from fireships or any others, had set out to sea again, and was now cruising down the gulf. The land army, of near three hundred combatants, had thereupon circled the forts of the estuary and appeared with great suddenness before Ciudad Real itself, at the very foot of the fortifications, having gained a great advantage by thus avoiding all combat, and hence all useless losses. And, by excess of good luck, the Filibusters, having, so to speak, flanked their enemies, now found themselves occupying the only road along which Ciudad Real could despatch couriers seeking re-enforcements either from Panama, or Sainte-Foi de Bogotà. The siege could therefore be conducted at leisure with no fear of premature interference.

It was not, however, Thomas's intention to let matters

drag. Most trenchantly he had replied to the Adventurer d'Oléron when the latter inquired:

"Does any one of us know anything about mines, redoubts, and other mole's work, required for taking a fortified place, according to the rules of warfare?"

"What need of rules or moles?" returned Thomas, contemptuously. "Aren't we as fit to make an assault, as these Spanish are fit to surrender?"

Camp had been pitched on the summit of a slope, a short half-league distant from the ramparts. So as to leave nothing to chance, eight guard-posts had been set around the camp, and each city gate was closely watched by a flying squad. Besides this, scouting parties went out hourly, gliding up to the very bank of the moat. The weak point of the fortifications—if such existed—must be discovered without delay, since Thomas was already talking about making an assault. Besides, Thomas spared neither himself nor anyone else in his eagerness to reach his goal promptly. And, as has been seen, he had in person conducted one of these scouting parties, the very one that he was now leading back to camp.

"*Hola!*" cried Redbeard, who was in command of the eight corps of sentinels, with Mary Rackham as second in command, "*Hola*, General l'Agnelet, have you found the spot where we're to scale the wall?"

"*Voire!*" said Thomas prudently. "We'll talk about that later, when we take counsel together."

As though his lips had been stitched together, he entered the camp and betook himself to his tent.

There were not many tents in the camp. Most of the Filibusters, sons and descendants of the Buccaneers of yore, plumed themselves on sleeping better and more soundly out under all the winds of heaven than any city dweller ever did in his bedroom. Without the slightest

ceremony, these hardy sons of Adventure rolled themselves in some covering or other, often their cloaks, made of goatskins, and, by way of pillow, doubled up an arm under their heads. Only the leaders, to indicate the dignity of their position, and a scant number of the soldiers who had a little money, and whose vanity derived pleasure in proving that fact, had brought with them, in the slim baggage stores of the expedition—scarcely enough to load the backs of the score of Negro slaves serving as baggage crew—a few fire-hardened stakes and some well-tarred canvas to serve as shelter. Fifteen or twenty of these tents were grouped in the middle of the ground occupied by the army. Thomas's tent, similar to the others in every respect, was distinguishable from them only by a long lance which, adorned with the St. Malo emblem, the flag of the expedition, he had thrust into the ground in front of the flap that served as a door.

And now, having pushed aside the canvas, arranged so that a breadth served to curtain the opening, Thomas, bending down, entered the tent, which was too low to admit of his standing upright.

A girl sat huddled at the back of the tent, her chin nearly touching her knees, her arms hanging down to her heels. She raised her eyes toward him—it was Juana.

For Juana, too, was a part of the land army.

When the Filibusters disembarked on the left bank of the Rio Grande, Thomas, to their general astonishment, gave orders that, "by force or otherwise"—so he had commanded—the captive up to that time kept under lock and key in the captain's cabin, should be disembarked also. Juana, however, had offered no resistance, and had even refrained from all questions, although she had cast extremely curious glances around her as the skiff brought her towards shore. Perhaps she recognized the approach to that Ciudad Real of which she was so inordinately proud. But if so, she said not a word to betray that fact.

After which, for four long days, from the beach where the army had disembarked, to the very ramparts of the city, Juana had marched along with the Filibusters, still without a word or even a sigh of complaint. Besides, no one spoke to her, Thomas no more than any of the rest. Not once had he broken the silence he had adopted toward his prisoner from the very first moment of the expedition. And even now, the journey ended, and the army encamped before Ciudad Real, and on the very eve of entering it sword in hand, he doggedly maintained his obstinate silence; he had not even so much as crossed the threshold of this tent—his own—before that moment.

Now for the first time he stepped within it. And Juana, astonished, though she allowed no trace of her astonishment to appear, had, in the first moment of surprise, raised her eyes towards him.

Face to face, they stared at one another, he and she, for a long time, the one as silent as the other.

Then Thomas, without lowering his eyes—for a fortnight of absolute command, imperiously exercised, had brought back to him all his earlier assurance, said, rudely:

"Do you know where you are?"

She shrugged her shoulders disdainfully, as though to say that it mattered little to her where she was, here, there, or anywhere.

"Good, my fine wanton!" said he with a contemptuous laugh. "And you don't care much either, do you? Good! Good! However, do you see this side of the tent here? Set your ear against it presently, and take good care to keep that same ear open. For on the other side of this cloth I shall hold counsel in a moment, I warn you. And, little curious though you may be, the Devil of all Hell carry me away with him, if you don't take a strange pleasure in hearing our deliberations!"

Still looking straight into her eyes, and laughing louder than ever, he stepped back until he was out of the

tent. The canvas flap then fell over the opening, masking it as before he had entered.

A little later the trumpet sounded throughout the camp, and the chiefs of the expedition gathered round the St. Malo emblem, now the flag of the army of invasion. Thomas, the general, stood waiting for his lieutenants, both arms crossed over the lance which served as flagstaff.

"Brothers of the Coast!" said he, when all had assembled, "a while ago I examined, and pretty closely, the rampart, the moat, and even others of the gimcracks hereabouts, such as palisades, casemates, bastions, cavaliers, semi-lunes, curtains, posterns, and all such nonsense, that so plentifully surrounds Ciudad Real on all sides. Well then, you must know that everything is prospering, and that the defenders of the city appear to place their trust in their masonry—with somewhat overweening presumption. But that is nothing. We shall, none the less, be this very night in the heart of the public square, if the Virgin of the Grand' Porte, in whom I have all faith, deigns to accept the vow I now make to her—to wit, to build her a chapel in the isle of the Tortoise, just as soon as we return thither, and to put into it all that we shall pillage in the way of rich and beautiful things from the churches, abbeys, monasteries, and convents of the city yonder!"

"So be it, said and sworn!"—promptly accepted the Adventurer from Dieppe, who was a good Catholic, the while the Huguenot d'Oléron, having understood that it was the Very Holy Mother of God who was being mentioned and glorified, spat on the ground to show his scorn of the same. Nevertheless, he did not dare object for the flaming eyes of the Malouin were fastened upon him, with a glare right threatening.

As to Loredano, he was smiling as usual, quite ready to approve all that did not threaten harm to his own interests. Likewise, Redbeard and Mary Rackham, save

that the Englishman burst into a great roar of laughter, and that the woman Corsair, gravely preoccupied in playing with a new Toledo poignard that she was wearing for the first time, had not heard so much as a syllable of the harangue.

As no one breathed a word in reply, Thomas continued:

"Since we are all agreed upon this, we can go on to other matters. Brothers of the Coast, I have already warned you that the walls to be climbed are high, and the moats to be crossed are deep. Nevertheless, since we have made up our minds to it, we shall surely be in Ciudad Real to-morrow. Of that not the slightest doubt. Now who among you all has the keenest sight?"

Still no one breathed a word. Attentive, and already trusting and docile, the Filibusters awaited the Corsair's orders.

"Well and good," Thomas went on, proudly. "Then I know what none of the rest of you knows."

He drew from his belt a long arrow pointed with a thorn, the very one that an Indian, defending the ramparts, had a while ago aimed at Thomas, missing him by a close shave.

Thomas raised the arrow, holding it up to the sight of all his crew.

"Here is what will serve us as ladder and drawbridge, if it so please Our Lord and His Holy Mother!"

The arrow was intact save for its head which had split as it struck the stone against which it flew. The Adventurers, open-mouthed, moved a step forward, the better to see this feathered dart they had just heard described as a "ladder" and "drawbridge."

"Fine!" said Mary Rackham, the first to break silence, and mockingly she drew a finger over the blunted head. "Fine! *Tripes de Dieu!* That is certainly a levelled moat, and a wide-open fortress wall. Up then, my men, there's no more to be said. The city is ours!"

Thomas was not even listening. The Huguenot

d'Oléron, curious as all heretics are, was asking questions.

"How can this arrow? . . ."

Haughtily, Thomas answered him.

"If I give you my word for it, that suffices, it seems to me. Come, no wrangling. We have other affairs to deliberate upon. This now is for you, brother Loredano, to ponder. The coming night will be dark, and there will be no moon. Will you, in spite of the darkness, know how to guide us, once we have taken the outer walls, through the tangled skein of the streets, alleys, and cross-roads?"

"Neither better nor worse than in the full light of day," declared the Venetian.

"We should, by rights, make all haste to occupy the chief avenues of defence, such as the citadel, and donjon, and the garrisons too. . . . Do you see the order in which this is to be done, and the plan to be followed?"

The Venetian reflected a few moments.

"I see," said he finally. "The thing we must do first, and with the utmost speed, is, not to occupy the places we take, but to set fire to them. For—our lives depend upon it!—we must not separate, being none too numerous as it is. . . . Therefore, we shall put the torch to certain buildings that I shall know how to find . . . no fear of that! . . . even though the night should be black as the pitch of Hell! Then, without lingering in either dwellings or storehouses—for there is no question of assaulting these separately, thus losing time, and scattering our forces—we'll make an onslaught on the citadel, capture it, and intrench ourselves there. Undoubtedly, all the leaders of the enemy will be there united, and thus we shall capture them at a stroke. Deprived of their captains, the soldiers will not long hold out. And thus we shall control everything long before sunrise. Our chief care should be, as we trace our course of fire, to avoid the convents, which without giving us any advantage would cost us the loss of precious time and a number of

lives too, should we attack them—and worse still, perhaps. But it is for me to guide you, and, without disastrous encounter, to find the straight path between the monks on one side and another."

"Good," said Thomas.

He hesitated a moment as though pondering some matter. Then, in a lower tone, and a curiously different voice, his words tumbling out in singular fashion, he asked:

"And so we shall find assembled in the citadel, you say, brother Loredano, all the chief lords and nobles of the city? What are their names . . . and what do you know of them?"

Mary Rackham once more burst out into raillery.

"By my faith," she exclaimed, "that is surely important! We must know whether these Spanish monkeys are named Carlos, or Antonio, or Josè, that is certain!"

Unmoved, Thomas seemed not to have heard her. And Loredano, ever courteous and affable, was already offering an answer.

"Ciudad Real," he explained, "is not a city of nobles. Its inhabitants are but a vulgar lot, mere *canaille* come from Spain, the hangers-on of the soldiers His Catholic Majesty sent hither years ago. This *canaille* promptly grew scandalous rich through commerce and the mines of the country. But it is none the less *canaille*, and thus the city is entirely lacking in brave burghers, and yet more in those of noble blood. The only lords and chiefs are those the King sends here—to wit, a Governor, Felipe Garcia by name—unless he has been replaced within these last two years, which I doubt, for he had then but just arrived—a Counsellor, named Pedro Inigo, and an Attorney-General, Don Luis Medina Sol—these, of course, being the civil dignitaries. As to the military, the Governor is in command of diverse captains of infantry. But I doubt whether I know any of these, for the companies stationed at Nueva Granada are con-

stantly being changed, and those now occupying Ciudad Real were doubtless at Sainte-Foi or at Macaraye when I was here last."

Thomas, who was listening with the utmost attention, had yet another question:

"These Governors, Attorneys-General, and Counsellors doubtless have their wives and children with them . . . for whom we could exact fine ransoms?"

"No," said Loredano. "No magistrate or gentleman of Spain ever would think of bringing his family to a city entirely peopled with rabble. All those whom I have mentioned live there as though unmarried."

Thomas, seemingly astonished, raised his eyebrows.

"*Oui da!*" said he. "But is there no other chief personage, whom you have omitted to mention?"

Loredano, after reflection, gave a sudden shrug.

"*Diantre*, so there is, by our Lion!" said he with a contemptuous laugh. "I had forgotten a number of these persons, and yet, they are not negligeable, if it is a question of obtaining ransoms, for they are all very rich. Although a city of vulgar populace, as I have said, Ciudad Real none the less is possessed of a pride at times leading to turbulence. And thus, for fear of uprisings and other troubles, the Catholic King formerly gave his consent that these boors should elect among their number a Mayor, sergeants-at-arms, bailiffs, and four lieutenants of the militia—all persons to be selected from the richest of the crew. The Mayor, if I remember rightly, was called, or caused himself to be so called, as though he were a noble—though far from being so—Don . . . Don Enrico? . . . Alonzo? . . . By the Lion, I have forgotten . . . Enrico, perhaps . . . *oui da!* Don Enrico Forez . . . or Perez . . . in short, something of that nature. . . . At any rate, this fellow had his wife and children with him, to such good purpose that he caused one of his sons to be appointed lieutenant of militia, and purposed to marry one of his daughters to I don't know

what manner of so-called hidalgo, lieutenant of militia also. The damsel's name was Juana, as far as I remember, and Don Felipe Garcia—Don Felipe, the Governor —in conversation with me one day, declared her a handsome maid."

"All is for the best!" said Thomas, cutting the Venetian short. "For the best, yes, and the booty will surely be twice and thrice that which we had reason to expect."

Again he was running his words together as though now in the greatest haste to settle this matter of the Spanish chieftains. And then once more his tone changed, and in a haughty, firm voice, he continued his address to the council, concluding the deliberation:

"Brothers of the Coast," said he, "all being duly provided for, let us separate. But at midnight, let every man be afoot, armed, and ready for the attack. Until that time, this is the order that I, Thomas l'Agnelet, General of the Army, now give you. Let the scouts gather the greatest number possible of the arrows that the Indians in the service of Castille will not fail to let fly in profusion from the top of the ramparts, with but a little provocation. Then, let all the cotton trees of the plantations round about be stripped of their fluff. For we shall have need of all these things shortly as you shall see. And now, *Vive Dieu!* and may He guard us well!"

The company retired, and Thomas remained alone, still leaning with both arms on the lance that served as flagstaff for the Malouin standard, now the emblem of the army of Adventure. After a little while, he took two or three steps, looking fixedly toward his tent as though with the purpose of entering it. Yet he did not, but sat meditating beside it; and on his broad imperious face there flickered traces of a smile, in which he seemed, in advance, to taste his triumph.

## CHAPTER X

NDER cover of the black night, the Filibusters had advanced in silence to within arm's length of the first palisades. A fitful wind, dry and fever hot, was soughing through the trees and the tall grass. And the light footfalls of the marching army mingled with this rustling sound and blended with it so well that not one of the fifty or sixty Spanish sentinels stationed on the ramparts had yet divined anything of what was afoot.

And now Thomas Trublet—"Thomas the Lamb" henceforth—who had been advancing at the head of his men, as was proper, halted, considering that he was now at the right distance from the fortifications for putting his plan of battle into execution. At his command, breathed in a voice scarcely audible, fifty Adventurers, chosen from among the surest marksmen, began to load their muskets, but in strange fashion. Instead of bullets, each one of them rammed in one of the arrows he carried; but first he wound around the end of the arrow a handful of the cotton fluff bulging from his pockets. After which, having all simultaneously struck a light, and set fire to the cotton, they took aim at the top of the rampart, and let fly their fifty shots as it were one. On the instant, fifty streaks of fire sped through the darkness, some riddling the guard-house, sentry-boxes and other light buildings set here and there on the bastions and curtain; others striking more distant marks, spreading terror within the city itself, for, by black witchcraft, it seemed,

these devils' brands started a fire wherever they struck.

"What did I tell you?" cried Thomas boastfully.

By way of reply, he was loudly acclaimed, now that there was no further need of silence or concealment. The hot wind was fanning the flames already started in all that was combustible. On the burning ramparts the Spaniards were running hither and yon, in frantic confusion, blinded by the intense light; and the Filibusters had now nothing to fear. Above the moat, the guard assigned to the casemates and the parapet also began to grow uneasy, and to give ground, falling back on the escarpment. They could be seen admirably, their black silhouettes outlined against the blazing fort, and nothing could have been of greater assistance in shooting them down just at the right moment, as they rushed out on the talus, ready to jump down from the counterscarpe, and yelling at the top of their voices for the posterns of the riflepits to be opened. The Filibusters meantime made good use of their muskets, with such effect that in less than a quarter of an hour there was not an enemy left alive, save within the walls. Seeing which, Thomas cried out, with all the strength of his lungs: "Brothers of the Coast, *sus!* Up and at them!"

And immediately the army replied with a triumphant acclaim, and as one man: "L'Agnelet! L'Agnelet! L'Agnelet! . . . *Sus, Frères de la Côte,* up and at them!" They attacked. . . .

The walls were cleared in one single bound, the assailants helping one another up on shoulders and back, all in the time it takes to swallow a handful of grapes. Then, in close formation, the Adventurers charged, General Thomas and Guide Loredano leading them in a furious gallopade through fire, blood, debris, gutted corpses, and brain-dripping heads, into the already half-conquered city.

One hour later, the work was done. Almost without striking a blow, six or seven buildings—barracks, powder-

magazines, City Hall—*ayuntamiento*, the Spaniards call it—the library, over-full of useless scrawls, warehouses of all sorts, workrooms of one kind and another, had all been duly spitted and roasted, under the wise counselling of the Venetian. Not a single embattled convent had been met to bar the way. And, at the end of a long prowl through thirty back streets, narrower and more winding than any blind alley in St. Malo, the invaders had finally come upon a barricaded door, guarded by a moat, with the bridge drawn high. On the far side of the ditch could be dimly distinguished the wall of a barbican. But neither fortified door, nor moat could long delay the Filibusters. The thirty soldiers they found at the barbican were promptly hanged, as a warning and example, and the army sped on. A crenellated incline led from the barbican to the castle. The invaders made quick work of it, and the terrified defenders had not even had time to lower the portcullis before Thomas set to making fine play with his sword. Once more the enemy was routed. The whole army then joined its chief, who, as was his luck, had not suffered even a scratch. And it seemed in good truth that the victory was won. The first detached building had been carried. The hall of arms now lay defenceless before them. Only the donjon remained to be worried and gnawed at, serving as the dessert of this fine feast, devoured in too great haste and in mouthfuls far too greedy, by all odds.

Thomas Trublet, he who was so aptly called "the Lamb," wiped his arms dripping red with blood by rubbing them on his hose; then he turned suddenly towards his men, seeking the English Filibuster Redbeard. And, seeing him:

"Brother Bonny," said he, and his voice was hoarse, as though he had drunk, "Brother Bonny, is the woman there?"

"Yes, or may the Grand Cric eat me alive!" swore the Filibuster.

At that very instant two Negro slaves advanced, dragging along by her slender arms, cruelly tied and bound, the woman in the case—Juana.

By order of the general, the prisoner had been made to follow the army even as it attacked. And thus she had with her own eyes seen the victory of the Adventurers, the defeat of the Spanish, and all the discomfiture, ruin, and rout of this city—which was, one might say, her homeland, the city of which she had so often and so proudly boasted, and which she had believed forever impregnable. She had been forced to look on while three hundred ragamuffins, three hundred common thieves, captured and conquered it—without so much as a single battle, swallowing it down on the run, and with a laugh.

And, little by little, as the Negro slaves commissioned to guard her, pushed her or carried her from one difficult pass to another, through burning buildings, over heaps of dead bodies, and as, all the while she never ceased finding at the head of these irresistible conquerors, the terrible man who was their chief, Juana, broken with weariness, as well she might be, and half-dead with anguish, felt all her former courage and her vain pride slip away from her, felt herself becoming a poor inert thing, without strength or will, and almost without instincts.

Into the midst of the great hall which opened into the court of arms, now crowded with a throng of blood-stained Adventurers, the two Negroes dragged this prostrate thing that had once been Juana, and threw her down at the master's feet. She neither wept nor moaned. Half-kneeling, in the attitude of a creature whose strength has all but totally given out, she remained where she had been thrown, fixing on Thomas Trublet wide, vacant eyes. But he, drunk with battle and triumph, took a step towards her, stopping when his foot touched her unresisting body.

"Ho," he growled. "So here you are, my fine maid! Good! And do you know what soil is that you touch? *Pardieu!* No need to search your mind! To make sure of your being right, I'll tell you. This is Ciudad Real, which I have just captured. You are in the citadel of Ciudad Real. Look yonder! The court of arms, and here, the donjon. Look, look, I tell you, my Moorish sorceress! Within that donjon are your father, and brother, and even your sweetheart, fled there for refuge, and still alive! And, as you are aware, I know them all by name. And now, look here! You see those railings on the balconies? That is where I am going to hang your father, and your brother, and your sweetheart, I swear it to God, who now hears me, and I swear it by the Virgin of the Grand' Porte, who gave me this victory, I swear it by the Christ of the Ravelin!"

He turned towards his men, who were listening, speechless with amazement.

"Now, *Vive Dieu!* up, Brothers of the Coast, to the donjon. Follow me, all of you, and let those who are my men go where I lead!"

He grasped the rope binding the prisoner's arms and himself dragged her along after him as he rushed into the court of arms, sword in hand.

Though they had lost but this little time in words, the enemy had made good use of it. The door of the donjon was now open, and while the Filibusters, swarming out of the first hall, rushed into the court of arms, making straight for the door at the end, a troop of men suddenly ran out from this opening, and threw themselves upon the invaders, while a great volley of musket-shots vomited from every embrasure and loophole in the place, to such good effect that Thomas's army then and there lost more men than it had lost in all the time that followed the scaling of the ramparts. Instantly, a desperate battle began. On the threshold of the donjon, an old nobleman of noticeably proud bearing, dressed in black velvet, and

doubtless infirm and crippled, appeared, borne in an armchair by two laqueys; and from this spot he called out to his soldiers, urging them to fight well, with all skill and valour. Of a truth, inspired both by their leader and by necessity, they were doing their best. Had it not been for the incomparable daring of the Filibusters, and their matchless skill in the handling of their arms, these Spaniards might very well have won the fight.

But, as soon as the first shock of surprise had passed, Thomas and his men soon regained the advantage. For every Filibuster to fall, six of the enemy measured their length on the ground. And now that the *mêlée* was general, the musketeers from above dared no longer fire, for fear of killing their own men. Already English Redbeard, and the Dieppois, and the Adventurer d'Oléron, striking great blows to right and left, and cutting the Spanish force wide open, had reached the door of the donjon; and clinging to hinges and frame, prevented the enemy from closing it. Mary Rackham, fighting more ferociously even than any of the men, came finally upon the old noble in the armchair, and nailed him to it with a furious sword-thurst. This was no less than the Governor of Ciudad Real himself, Don Felipe Garcia. Seeing that he was dead, his men lost heart, and many of them threw down their arms, crying "Mercy!" and "Quarter!" while others fled hither and thither, with small chance of escape.

Then the conquering Filibusters began to make their way into the donjon itself. Most of them sprang to attack the upper storeys, climbing like cats up every stairway, pounding down the doors, tearing open the trap-doors, coming out behind the men at the loopholes and embrasures, and killing everyone as they rushed on. Quickest and most supple of them all, Loredano was the first to reach the platform where the royal standard of Castille was floating in the breeze, and, cutting it down, he ran up the white flag in its stead, the white flag, emblem

of the Filibusters, that he had brought for this very purpose, wound sash-wise around his waist. As it unfurled in full sight of the Adventurers, it was acclaimed with long sustained shouts of victory. Several Filibusters, however, leaving their comrades, were examining the lower storeys, and even, in some cases, indulging a fancy for investigating the underground structure. Everywhere there was a criss-crossing of vaulted passages, along which were many doors barred with iron. Some of these, on being broken down, revealed a number of the enemy, both soldiers and militia, who had taken refuge there. They offered scant resistance. And thus, from top to bottom, the donjon was by now entirely in the hands of the Adventurers. Nothing was to be heard of the war-cries that had resounded but a short time before. Nothing was to be heard now but shrieks and groans, and prayers for mercy.

Thomas Trublet, somewhat hampered in his movements by the captive he was still dragging behind him, had mounted only so far as the second storey, stopping there to engage in a combat that offered. About fifty steps above the court of arms, a great hall opened out on the landing. Three large swinging doors stood at the end of this vast room, and such was their appearance that Thomas concluded they could not but lead to other rooms of importance. Seeing which, he ran towards them, with shoulder and fist assailing the middle one. It did not yield, being immensely heavy, made of thick oak, and studded with nails. Thomas took a step back, and cast a glance around, in search of a battering ram. There was nothing he could so use; but on the wall hung a trophy of arms of various kinds, among them several boarding-axes. At that same moment the Negro slaves, deputed to guard Juana, and unwilling to leave her even after Thomas had himself assumed the charge of her person, appeared in the hall, in search of their master's orders. With a gesture he bade them bring him one of

the axes suspended on the wall. Arming themselves like their master, all three fell upon the untractable door, which promptly was shattered. At once, Thomas, pulling Juana after him, leaped through the opening, brandishing his axe. And the two slaves bravely followed him.

A narrow and lofty room lay on the other side of the broken door and in this room three men, armed with swords and pistols, sat side by side behind a table, all three magnificently dressed. And no sooner had he laid eyes on these men than Thomas, in some mysterious fashion, felt certain that these were the father, brother, and affianced husband of Juana. And so in truth they were. He rushed upon them. But Juana, recognizing them too in that same instant, uttered a cry so piercing that, in spite of himself, Thomas stopped short in his onslaught, and turned his head toward his prisoner.

Unluckily for him. For six pistol shots rang out in answer to Juana's cry. All three Spaniards had risen at a bound, firing with both hands. The Negroes fell one upon the other, killed on the instant. Thomas, one thigh pierced, his left shoulder torn, advanced, nevertheless, and brought his axe down with such fury that the first of his three adversaries crumpled under it, his head split open to the very neck. The other two, recoiling, drew their swords. Thomas faced them, his reddened axe uplifted. And so frightful was his glance, that two to one though they still were, his antagonists still unwounded, neither of these dared at first to attack him. For four seconds they stood motionless, hesitating.

But Juana, emerging now from her stupor, and seeing her enemy's blood streaming from his wounded flank and slashed shoulder, thought—too soon—that Thomas was vanquished. Anticipating her triumph, she burst into shrill laughter. Now this piercing and mocking sound struck Thomas like a whip-lash in the face. Suddenly, he lunged forward, released the spring of his upraised

arm, and struck. Both swords darting towards him reached him, but did not pierce him through, for both men had sprung hastily back, to avoid the descending axe. One of them, however, did not escape it, and fell, cut open at the breast. And now there remained but a single enemy facing the Corsair. But Thomas, almost spent, was staggering now, scarce able to raise his axe grown too heavy for his arm, the while the Spaniard flourished his four-foot rapier as it were a straw.

His strength gone, Thomas stumbled, and was about to fall. Already the Spaniard was advancing, about to thrust his blade full in his adversary's heart when Juana again broke into her frightful laugh. And once more Thomas, like a dying horse under the prick of the spur, gave a bound. In vain the Spaniard pressed in his thrust. The steel, sunk in up to the hilt, could not stay the Corsair's final effort. Falling like a bolt, the axe had been more rapid still than the sword. The *alcade*—for it was he—crumpled up first, stone dead. Thomas, his life pouring from him, plunged forward on the man's body. In the high lofty room there remained no living soul now, save Juana.

A long time passed. Rigid, as though changed to stone, she gave never a stir, her eyes, dilated with horror, resting on the heap of men but a short time before alive and strong, now nothing but food for graves.

A long time passed. At last the prisoner took courage to advance, to stoop, to touch the four bodies with her hands.

Three of them were already growing cold. For them there was no remedy. The fourth was warm, more than warm—burning. And this was Thomas. In spite of his five wounds, Thomas was not yet dead, only senseless, with fever devouring him.

Juana thereupon rose, with a grim resolve. Two steps away from her lay a dagger, unsheathed, fallen from

some belt or other. Juana seized it, and came back to Thomas. . . . But she did not strike.

Her arm was upraised; and then it fell back, inert. An unknown power, greater than her will, was loosing her fingers, tearing the poignard from her. Disarmed, she gave a long shudder, that shook her whole being. Yet neither her hatred nor her anger had weakened. The man lying there at her mercy was he who had taken her captive, who had treated her with frightful brutality, who had attempted to rape her, who had then humiliated her. It was he who had, before her very eyes, slain her betrothed, her father, her brother. . . . She loathed him! . . . Yes . . . but kill him . . . no, she could not.

She could not . . . he was too strong, too brave—and too handsome perhaps, lying there, blood-stained, and victorious—on the heaped up bodies of his enemies.

Suddenly, Juana knelt before him—before the helpless body of Thomas l'Agnelet, her master—and, tearing away his clothing, wet with great red stains, ripping her own dress of soft linen into strips, she set about binding up his five deep wounds.

# BOOK IV

# THE KING

## CHAPTER I

ON a fine evening some six months after the capture of Ciudad Real by Thomas l'Agnelet and his Filibusters, Louis Guénolé, who had been but lieutenant on the *Belle Hermine*, when said Thomas was but Trublet, brought a fine new Corsair frigate fresh from St. Malo to anchor in the roads of the Tortoise.

No sooner had the anchor caught bottom than Louis Guénolé anxiously raised his spy-glass to his eyes. Was that, sure enough, the *Belle Hermine* gently heaving yonder at the end of her heavy cable? And was everything safe and sound on board the poor frail bark that had lain so long disarmed and abandoned? So Louis Guénolé wondered, as he peered.

And then came joyful astonishment. For the *Belle Hermine*, lying at anchor at the very same spot where he had last looked upon her, offered a fine trim appearance to the view, with rigging all shipshape, and a fresh painted keel. From her poop ensign staff a gay Malouin flag fluttered in the breeze. Nor was that all. Her mainmast flaunted another flag still, a curious flag that Louis could not make out, though he distinguished a double-pointed scarlet streamer, and in the centre, a kind of ram, woven, it seemed, of gold.

"What might that be?" asked Guénolé, his eyes wide with wonder.

Then he gave a shrug. Whatever it was, he could soon find out. All he had to do was to go look.

"The long-boat!" he ordered.

And so, even before going as etiquette demanded to pay his respects to the Sieur d'Ogéron, still the Governor for the French King of the Tortoise and of the San Domingan coast, Louis Guénolé betook himself to pay a visit to Thomas Trublet.

Thomas Trublet—now known as Thomas l'Agnelet—was awaiting the visit, standing at the gangway, and stamping with impatience. From afar he had seen his lieutenant of former days arriving, and his heart quickened for he had never ceased to love the boy. And thus Louis Guénolé, as soon as he had climbed the ladder and come over the side, was seized upon, embraced, and welcomed in hearty fashion, to such a degree that he was soon quite blown and it was only after a respite that he had breath enough to exclaim at what he saw.

And exclaim he did, finally. Not without reason! For Thomas, this Thomas before him, was no longer Thomas, the Thomas of yore. Transformed from head to foot, Thomas appeared rather some lord of noble lineage, his hat adorned with a triple row of gold-lace and an enormous red plume, his sumptuous coat of blue velvet gold-embroidered on every seam and falling below his knees, while, as a final touch, two small half-breed slaves, arrayed like diminutive laqueys, followed the noble lord previously described, like two shadows. Open-mouthed, Louis gazed at his former chief. And, by way of first salutation, he could find naught to say, but cried out in spite of himself: "Oh, brother Thomas! How magnificent you are . . . more gayly arrayed than an Easter Sunday!"

"Bah!" said Thomas, with a shout of laughter, "don't you know, brother Louis, that during your absence,

which, God help me! seemed longer to me than forty Lents strung end to end, I have become very rich and very famous? Listen then! Admiral of the fleet, General of an army, Governor of a city—in truth, almost a king or prince . . . all of these have I been. In proof thereof, behold my sovereign standard, floating there above . . . look! . . . Yes, all of these have I been, brother Louis! One might as well say 'Emperor' and be done with it. And with it all, I love you, neither more nor less than with my whole heart!"

Promptly, he clasped his brother to him, so tenderly, that the good Guénolé, thus hugged and kissed, and kissed again, could not but feel all uneasiness and distrust then and there flee from his breast.

" . . . And thus," Thomas was saying, after he had from end to end unwound the scroll of his amazing story, "and thus was the city taken; and thus did I more dead than alive lie within it. And then, brother Louis, though you could never believe it, the girl herself, having me at her mercy, instead of finishing me, as, my faith! I should have done in her place, set about dressing my wounds! And better still! Having bandaged me, she nursed me, and coddled me, keeping watch over me when I raved with fever, and when I slept, in a word, she cured me . . . and I swear that neither nursing sister nor a sister of charity could have been gentler nor more attentive. And thus are things now between us. All harm forgot, and love in command."

"*Ma Doué!*" murmured Louis Guénolé, dumbfounded.

Instinctively, he crossed himself, for the adventure just related appeared both extraordinary and mysterious—dubious certainly!

"And as to booty, you couldn't imagine anything like it!" the Corsair continued.

"Besides the *Belle Hermine*, we loaded eight large ships captured in the very harbour of Ciudad Real, for the

thrice-triple fools did not dare come out, so much did the fat capons fear being chased out to sea and there sunk by our frigate. . . . Of those eight ships, four, the best timbered, and strongest, were laden with metal, in coin and ingots. Of silver there were three full cargoes. Gold, precious stones, rich stuffs, and laces, made a fourth. Our Loredano, an ingenious fellow, had brought among his personal effects a goldsmith's scale, of which we made good use. . . . Brother mine, the gold alone weighed thirteen hundred pounds, the silver three hundred thousand and more. To say nothing of the cocoa, cochineal, campeachy, diverse manufactures, flour, olive oil, and excellent wines, of which we took eight hundred good hogsheads—and a powerful aid these wines were in helping me back to life. For during the pillaging, I was, as I have said, more dead than alive, and my Juana never left my bedside, day or night. Our Filibusters were not a whit the less loyal to me. Old comrade Redbeard, vice-commander of the fleet, and lieutenant-general of the army, next to me therefore in command, declared in the council meeting, at the time when the booty was divided, that, as our amazing victory had of a surety been prepared and won by me, and as I had paid for it with serious wounds, therefore, the five parts reserved as my share in the hunting compact were not enough, and that he, Redbeard, held it but just to award me five others. Which suggestion all the rest acclaimed with great hurrahs! And thus, on the day when I determined I must in truth be well—already we had been at La Tortue for two weeks by that time—several of our company came to pay me a visit of ceremony, and rolled into my presence three fine barrelsful of gold, said barrels containing seven hundred and twenty-six thousand French pounds, and in addition thereto pearls and precious stones of such sort that our King himself has none that are their equal. Juana since that day has worn a string of thirty diamonds around her neck; and Mon-

sieur d'Ogéron had but laid eyes on the stones when he offered me thirty thousand crowns, if I would but sell them!"

"*Ma Doué!*" replied Guénolé, admiringly.

He opened his mouth then as though to speak, but closed it again without having said a word. Besides, Thomas did not wait for an answer. Already he had gotten up—for the two friends were sitting at table in that same main cabin of the *Belle Hermine* where so many times before they had talked together in like fashion, heart to heart—and Thomas was now running to the cupboards, from which he drew two glasses and a jug. "*Pardieu!*" swore he, "here is some of the very wine we vintaged in Ciudad Real. Taste it, and tell me what you think of it! And it's but fitting on my life, that we should drink to this, our happy meeting, and to your safe arrival at La Tortue!"

Already he had filled two brimming goblets to the brim. Louis Guénolé raised his glass.

"As for me," said he, "I am going to drink to your return—to our return together—to St. Malo!"

And he drained the goblet.

Louis Guénolé's turn then to tell his story. A simple one it was. And thus he concluded:

"Even before you took Ciudad Real, and even before you took our galleon, your other exploits had opened wide the gates of the Grand' Porte of our city, once closed against you. True, the Kerdoncuffs long clamoured for vengeance upon you, declaring that their Vincent had died in a duel not fairly fought. But that noise was soon hushed. And as the fame spread through our homeland of all the victories you won, and the prizes you captured, and as our good Chevalier Danycan's coffers filled with the sequins your bills of exchange brought him, all such calumnies died down, and your name, my Thomas, grew to be a byword for courage in our province. And from that moment, it was proved and recognized that you

could not be guilty of any crime more serious than an unlucky sword-thrust. And thus, when I myself arrived at Mer Bonne on our galleon, the whole populace of our town had but one cry in their throats. Why had you not come back? Three hundred brave lads were there waiting for you, and they shed hot tears at not being able to bear you home in triumph."

"Ah! Ah!" said Thomas, somewhat vaingloriously.

"The Kerdoncuffs too, far from trying to make trouble for you, would be glad enough to show they must be numbered amongst your friends, no doubt of that; and still more would it please them to be of the number of your relations, if ever you will marry their Anne-Marie; but, on that score, you don't yet know what happened. . . ."

"Be still!" whispered Thomas, interrupting him with an abrupt gesture that Guénolé for the moment failed to understand.

But while they thus cut one another short, Louis astonished, and Thomas uneasy, the door of the captain's cabin opened, and a fine lady appeared before them.

Juana. . . . Arrayed and adorned in the richest fashion imaginable, with a skirt of changeable satin, and a mantle of brocade below which showed a guimpe of the finest Flemish lace, she advanced slowly towards the table. As for her face, Guénolé then and there avowed to himself never to have seen anything so dazzling or so voluptuous. And her form was in good truth a form befitting a queen.

"*Pardieu!*" said Thomas thereupon, suddenly cheered by this sight, "here she is, arrived at the very moment when we were speaking of her. Come, heart of mine, permit me to present to you my own brother and best of comrades, of whom many a time you have heard me speak. Here is Louis Guénolé himself, newly arrived from St. Malo."

Promptly, Louis made his most gallant bow, marvel-

ling to himself as he did so that Thomas should have learned to speak in so elegant a fashion. The lady, meanwhile, responded with a courtesy. After which, speaking in a free and easy fashion, and as though the matter had been agreed upon in advance, and needed no longer to be discussed, being for all time settled:

"Oh, monsieur," said she, "I am ravished to see you, and in truth we were most impatient for your arrival . . . tell me, do you bring the good news we await? And shall we soon, all difficulties banished, be able to start off together for your city, which I am already so eager to know and to admire?"

## CHAPTER II

S to this Spanish girl," Louis Guénolé questioned subsequently, " . . . are you going to bring her home with us?"

"What else?" was Thomas Trublet's brief reply.

And thereafter neither one opened his mouth on that subject, both knowing that words were of small account now and that a mysterious Power, a Will, stronger than both of theirs—or indeed than all three—was now conducting this affair.

The home-going was indeed close at hand. Eight days more, and the *Belle Hermine*, wind abeam, would be joyfully heading toward St. Malo.

Already Louis Guénolé was hard at work, arming the frigate once more. With the caution of the true sailor, who is more careful than old Dame Caution herself, he had taken a double crew on board his new ship before sailing from France. And thus the second frigate would be able to continue coursing West Indian waters, to the further profit of the Chevalier Danycan, her bourgeois, the while the *Belle Hermine* sailed for her home port bringing back Louis Guénolé, once more her lieutenant, and Thomas, once more her captain. For it was solely to bring Thomas home that Louis had left his beloved Brittany so soon again, and the snug house opening on the main road to town, and the sunny acres purchased with the gold he had won on the galleon and elsewhere. In vain had his shrewd bourgeois—who esteemed such fellows at their true worth, and would gladly have kept in

his service this new captain, already but a step from fame —tempted Louis Guénolé as best he could, with many a promise, flattering, and persuasive. But Louis Guénolé had accepted not a single offer save that of conducting the new ship to the Tortoise, and of leaving her there in charge of a second in command, while he set out at once for home again on the *Belle Hermine*. Having failed to obtain better, the Chevalier Danycan must needs give his approval to this program. He was besides too good a fellow not to accede—and willingly—to the wishes of the two brave lads, Trublet and Guénolé, who had so valiantly helped him—as he said himself, repeatedly—to become what he now was—nothing less than the richest of the St. Malo armourers.

"What now, my brave Louis," he had urged notwithstanding, "must you twice cross that wide ocean yonder, and for the sole purpose of fetching our Thomas back to us? And do you not think he knows the way home alone?"

"That he does, God help me!" Guénolé replied, revolving his wide-brimmed hat between his fingers. "He knows it full well. But I have sworn an oath, and would commit perjury, did I not go."

In truth, this distant and strange Tortoise filled him with a great uneasiness. There was little security there for either bodies or souls, and surely it was not an abiding place to be recommended for the solitary Thomas. Throughout the length of his double voyage, homeward as well as outward bound, Louis Guénolé had slept at ease not even one night in four, troubled as he was with a thousand dreams in which a thousand disasters overtook the poor Thomas he had left behind.

And now, after all, the thing which had actually happened to him was perhaps not the least alarming of them all.

Louis Guénolé, nevertheless, was hard at work, and

under his direction the *Belle Hermine* soon came to life. The new crew, every last man of it from St. Malo, was as fine in discipline as in good-will. Peaceable lads were these, taken on for the special purpose of bringing the frigate home to the fold; and not being Corsairs, they had no thirst for adventure. Little enough did they resemble the Filibusters, and Thomas held them in no little disdain, these honest lads, who had learned from the sheep they had tended on the upland pastures, to follow, and obey, just as—in fairness be it said—they had learned from the rams of their flocks to charge—and to good purpose. But docile they were, incurably, to the slightest order, carrying out manœuvres as though they were shearing wool. To Louis, however, this was small cause for complaint, and he profited by the time thus gained to double the plug-holes, scour every plank, and renovate the frigate from keel to truck; in short, shamelessly he took advantage of his crew, driving them to the very limit of their strength, the sooner to bring all things to such order as would permit of weighing anchor.

As for Thomas, he took upon himself no responsibility in the preparations, and leaving all such matters in Louis's hands, spent his last days in American air in making pleasant excursions among the islands, and his last nights in still more enjoyable drinking parties to which were invited all the Adventurers of the region. Juana herself did not disdain taking a part in these revels, and willingly presided at the love-feasts. Vain of her rich attire, she took pleasure—though touched with a secret contempt—in showing off her finery before the numerous damsels who never fail to share fortune with such Filibusters as come their way, so long as the latter have a good supply of gold, these damsels showing a marvellous skill in obtaining the greater part of their companions' wealth. The looting of Ciudad Real had munificently filled every pocket, and in consequence gorgeous luxury prevailed in La Tortue for a few weeks.

Glorious were the drunken debauches of the conquerors, with great tides of wine pouring in crimson waves over satins, velvets, laces, and embroideries of gold. There was gaming too, and many a Filibuster sat down rich to rise poor, by virtue of the magic of lansquenet. But not a whit did any of these victims of chance worry over their losses, for there, within reach, was the sea, and on the sea, the enemy's gold-laden ships. Though one might lose to-night, one could not help winning again, be it at cards, or at the game of war. Hence, many a furious pairing of cards, in the midst of royal revels.

Guénolé alone took no part in any of these pleasures, but remained obstinately on the frigate, redoubling his efforts to hasten the work of armament, that each day carried further towards completion.

At last the hour of departure arrived, the hour when, for the last time, the *Belle Hermine* was to weigh anchor, after her long and fruitful campaign. The year of grace 1677 was drawing to an end. Five years it was since that autumn when Thomas and Louis, captain and lieutenant, had left St. Malo to seek fortune and fame in the lands of the Filibusters. Fortune and fame they had found, assuredly! The just reward of so many years spent in rude toil. . . .

The very hour now for weighing anchor. . . . The fine October evening—and October, in the Antilles, is many times more brilliant and balmy than the summer months with us—was drawing to a close. On the day before, Thomas and Juana had begun taking leave of their comrades in war and pleasure—leave-takings by no means brief. It was only with great difficulty that Louis Guénolé had succeeded, thirty-six hours later, in interrupting them, when he had decided that departure could no longer be delayed.

The skiff at last, after some little trouble, put off from shore and set the captain and his lady on board. Where-

upon the lieutenant took command of the ship. The last anchor was heaved aboard, the sheets gathered, the yards swayed up, the sails trimmed, and finally the helm set on the northwest cape, the course being taken through the Bahama channel and Lucayan Isles, so as to take advantage of favourable winds and the currents setting from the Americas toward Europe. Gently submissive to her braces, bowlines, and the tack of her sheets, the *Belle Hermine* then began right joyously to cleave the calm water, while in the west, the equatorial sun, about to plunge over the rim of the horizon, sent out long crimson rays in great flames that mingled earth, sky, and sea in a dazzling conflagration.

Side by side on the poop-deck, Thomas and Juana stood gazing at the Sun King's noble retirement for the night. To larboard, towards the already darkening east, the Tortoise spread out its shores, greener than emerald. Beyond, the few dwellings scattered among the night-enveloped forests of the high hill, reflected from their windows the last blood-red darts of the sun. It was a marvellous scene. And Juana, both hands clutching the rail, was gazing at it avidly with her glowing eyes.

Louis Guénolé, having no more orders to give for the moment, came also to stand beside the captain. Happy to be under way, homeward bound, he brought his palm down in a ringing slap on Thomas's shoulder. And Thomas l'Agnelet now burst into a resounding laugh.

"Brother Louis," said he, stretching out an arm toward the coast, perceptibly less near even now, "would you believe it? At this very moment I am close to regretting that we must leave all this!"

But Juana, still gazing back, gave a shudder that ran down from shoulders to feet. Fairly wrenching herself free from the railing, she turned toward her lover:

"Oh," said she, "we shall come back!"

## CHAPTER III

FOR a fortnight the *Belle Hermine* tacked, beating her way through the narrow channel of the Bahamas, a ticklish body of water to navigate, with many a reef to northwards, and haunted by capricious winds. But Louis Guénolé, who had traversed its whole extent on his voyage back to France with the captured galleon, knew all its lurking dangers, and every detour that must be taken. Thus he made a good pilot and thanks to his vigilance, the *Belle Hermine* met with no mishap. And at last, on the seventeenth day of the voyage, Cape Sable, that marks the southern extremity of Spanish Florida, came into view. Rounding the cape, the frigate turned northward, keeping Great Abacco and the Mantanillas, the last isles of the Indies, well to starboard, as one should for safe passage through these waters.

The sea was of another colour now, as blue as before it had been green. Much did the sailors marvel at the change, but Louis Guénolé jested at their wonderment, rejoicing in this sign that the warm current flowing from American shores to the inlets and bays of Spain and England was close at hand. The *Belle Hermine* could hope for no better friend, on her eastward journey, than this warm stream.

Four days later the wind suddenly jumped from the eastern quarter to the west, and freshened to a cool stiff breeze. The clear sky rapidly filled with heavy clouds, and sharp squalls followed one another in rapid succes-

sion. Louis Guénolé close hawled his topgallants, and reefed his mizzen and tops'ls. And again he rejoiced, for all these changes occurred at their appointed time and in the order he had anticipated. Under her tops, lower, and spritsails, the *Belle Hermine* sailed large, faster than ever she had done with all canvas spread in pursuit of Dutchman or Spaniard. Soon all warmth vanished from the air, cold fog now covering the sea. As they filled their lungs with the humid breeze, it seemed to the St. Malo sailors that Brittany must already be close at hand.

Notwithstanding, day after day ran by; and each night the north star shone a little higher in the heavens.

Meanwhile, Thomas Trublet—Thomas l'Agnelet he was now—gave little heed to currents or winds, and still less to the stars, whether northern or tropical. While his lieutenant was hard at work with the crew keeping the frigate safe on its course, ever watchful of all things that might hinder a prosperous voyage, Thomas l'Agnelet was content to drink, eat, and sleep, and above all to disport himself right voluptuously in the company of his love, Juana. With pain and anguish Louis observed the great change that had come about in the habits and character of one he had formerly known as active and hardy, in work as at fighting, and he could not help attributing the transformation to some sort of mysterious spell cast upon his friend by the Spanish maid; nor did he ever fail to cross himself whenever he caught sight of her, firmly believing the girl to be a sorceress, for only one in league with the Devil could so bewitch his Thomas!

And witchcraft there was in the matter without doubt —but a witchcraft divine rather than devilish since it was nothing more nor less than love, a passion burning, violent, and avid, never sated, which the relentless Archer —the only sorcerer in this case—had aroused in the almost virgin heart of the Corsair with darts aimed

straight and plunging deep. Better could the terrible Thomas have withstood a whole squadron of the enemy than the black eyes and golden skin of the once disdainful beauty who now, submissive and loving, revealed herself a passionate mistress, expert in every refinement of caress.

And other days still passed by. . . .

Finally, Louis, who very methodically, had the log heaved hourly, judged that land could not be far distant. And even, from his observations of the north star, and the calculations he made therefrom, he concluded that said land would probably be the island of Ouessant, or Heussa, as those who speak low Breton call it; and this he made known. Whereupon there was a lively argument among the crew as to who should climb to the crow's-nest where there was the best chance of winning the sail-cloth shirt which every captain of a cruiser or ship returning from war must give to the lad who first descries the French coast. But it was ordained that not one of the *Belle Hermine's* crew was to earn this shirt inasmuch as neither Ouessant nor yet St. Malo was destined to be the port where the frigate first reached land.

It was on the morning of the fifty-sixth day, reckoning from the departure out of La Tortue, that the look-out suddenly described numerous sails in straight line ahead, apparently sailing free, helm on the eastern quarter, as the *Belle Hermine* herself was doing. Confident of the frigate's speed—it was already gaining on the ships sighted—Louis Guénolé did not hesitate to draw near. Seeing this, one of the squadron drew away from the others, and heaved to, as though to await the pursuer. Louis, through his spyglass, soon made her out as a ship of the King's—of the French King's—for she was even rigged and carried a double battery, while from the main-

mast floated a fine white satin ensign bearing the Fleur-de-Lys. A while later, her very name could be made out —the *Hazardeux*. And finally, clear as day, he saw a nobleman of proud bearing, seemingly in command of the King's crew, standing near the taffrail, speaking-trumpet in hand.

The St. Malo frigate likewise heaved to as soon as the distance was sufficiently small to admit of speech between the ships, and he who carried the speaking trumpet began at once, asking the questions customary at sea.

"Frigate ahoy! . . . Who may you be? . . . Whence come? . . . Whither bound?"

To which Louis Guénolé replied, speaking the truth. And at once the name of Thomas Trublet had a good effect, for the nobleman, having heard this name before, became more courteous than is customary with the King's gentlemen when they address mere Corsairs.

"Ahoy, *Belle Hermine!*" cried he. "This is the Chevalier d'Harteloire, captain for his Majesty of this ship carrying forty-four guns. But do you not know your St. Malo is tightly blockaded by Dutch squadrons, that now hold every inch of the Channel, from Ouessant to Pas-de-Calais? That is why we, two captains of the King, and the admiral of the squadron, are escorting this convoy of thirty-two merchantmen, endeavouring to get it safely into any one of our French ports, if so be there is one the enemy have neglected to watch."

Surprised at the news, fairly dumbfounded in truth, Louis Guénolé kept silence. The words of the Chevalier d'Harteloire, thanks to the trumpet, rang out loud and distinct, and the whole crew of the *Belle Hermine*, pressing round their lieutenant, lost not a syllable of it. Louis, pricking up his ears, though he did not once turn his head, heard anxious whispers behind him.

The Chevalier d'Harteloire once more took up the trumpet.

"Ahoy!" cried he, "I think you have little chance of

breaking through the enemy's blockade, and entering St. Malo unhindered. But you may, should you so wish it, take advantage of the convoy and its escort. We consist of three ships of his Majesty's, the *Français*, which carries the standard of the Sieur de Gabaret, our admiral's ship, the *Hazardeux*, and the *Maline*. One hundred and sixteen cannon. Enough to pass, so it please God."

And then, on Louis Guénolé's shoulder, a heavy hand descended. Thomas Trublet—Thomas l'Agnelet, henceforth—his attention roused by the unaccustomed disturbance, had just come out of the poop-castle. Facing the captain of the King, he saluted, and the plume of his wide felt hat waved proudly in the breeze. Then, calling out so loud that he could be heard marvellously well on either side, in spite of the distance, which was still considerable, and in spite of using no manner of trumpet:

"Ahoy, you of the King's ship!" shouted he, "Monsieur le Chevalier, I, Thomas, captain of this frigate, accept your courteous offer with all my heart, and join you, not to be defended, forsooth, but to defend with you your convoy and the honour of our King! That will make a hundred and thirty-six pieces, instead of a hundred and sixteen. Enough to pass, so it please God!"

And, proudly, he replaced his plumed hat, the while the Chevalier d'Harteloire, bowing in turn, removed his own, and swept the deck with its white plume.

## CHAPTER IV

BITING wind was blowing from the west. Long swells, green as seaweed, were running over the ocean, roughly shaking the ships as they rolled and plunged. Thick clouds darkened the sky, and banks of heavy fog hung over the water. In the east a haggard dawn was struggling against the lingering blackness of night.

"*Ma Doué!*" murmured Louis Guénolé, leaning over the rail of the quarter-deck, and scrutinizing the horizon line. "*Ma Doué!* If the weather doesn't clear up, and right soon, the Dutchmen in the crow's-nest won't have much chance to see us. And will we, I wonder, have a better chance to find the entrance into Havre, guarded as it is with shoals and sand-banks?"

He hesitated for a moment, then, with sudden decision, climbed down to the main cabin where he knocked with closed fist on the door of the captain's room where together Thomas and Juana lay sleeping. . . .

Christmas morning it was. During two long days the convoy, with the King's three ships and the *Belle Hermine* following close, like four sheep-dogs at the heels of a bleating flock, had been running before the wind, threading their way between the enemy's cruisers. In this year of grace 1677—so soon to draw to a close—the French squadrons, under the command of Messieurs de Vivonne and Duquesne had, it cannot be gainsaid, very neatly swept the sea of all hostile fleets throughout the length and breadth of the Mediterranean, which besides had been well-scoured and dusted, as early as 1676, by our vic-

tories of Agosta and Stromboli, that had put an end to the career of the formidable Ruyter himself. In the Antilles likewise Monsieur le comte d'Estrées, in command of the Atlantic squadron, had won a fine battle near Tobago. But these very successes drew our ships away from the northern and western coasts. And the admirals of the United Provinces, who had already gained the better of us at Walcheren, some four years earlier, were making good profit of our absence from home waters to regain their earlier advantage. Sixty of their ships were now scouring the Channel, and it was no small matter for Messieurs de Gabaret, d'Harteloire, and de Rosmadec—the captain of the *Maline* this last—to lead their convoy to safety thus under the very noses of enemies so formidably superior in numbers.

The chief of the squadron, after holding council on board his ship with his captains, gave orders to take a course due northeast, for the purpose of reaching the English coast, as promptly as might be, and then following it along within gunshot, for there was every probability that the enemy's squadron had established itself in French waters; and manœuvring in this fashion the convoy had a pretty good chance of not being sighted until the last moment, and might even then catch the blockaders napping and force a way through their lines by a sudden attack. As to the port of destination, the Sieur de Gabaret had resolved to reach Havre de Grâce if it could be done: for this port opens out on a wide and accessible sea, guarded by depths insufficient for the heavy Dutch hulls; moreover, the hours when the tide is favourable are more numerous there than in any other roadstead on the Channel. Louis Guénolé, himself informed of this choice, silently approved of it. As for Thomas, he as yet knew nothing of what was afoot, for not once had he come out of his cabin since the conversation carried on from their respective ships by the captain of the *Hazardeux* and himself two days earlier.

But, at this very hour, Monsieur de Gabaret had, by means of red and white ship's lanterns, just signalled to escort and convoy that they were all to come about eight points to starboard. This must mean then that Havre de Grâce was no longer any great distance away. With never a doubt in his mind, Louis Guénolé had not delayed even an instant to apprise his captain of the change in course, for, however great Thomas's indifference to events might have been up to that point, he would of a surety take his full share of the combat, if combat ensued.

Wherefore Louis Guénolé was now beating with his first on the door of the cabin where together Thomas and Juana were sleeping.

Almost at once Louis heard a great stirring about in the captain's quarters. In less than a minute, the door opened and Thomas appeared. Arrayed in shirt and breeches, he yet, even in this unceremonious dress, presented a sumptuous appearance, for his shirt was adorned with cascades of lace, and his breeches were as solidly worked over with embroideries as a church banner. Such as he was, on seeing it was Louis who knocked, he advanced till he was out of the cabin. And once across the threshold he closed the door behind him.

"What is it?" he asked, looking at Louis.

"Unless I mistake, there's a battle close ahead."

"Ah!" said Thomas.

He stood absorbed in thought for several seconds. Then, with a shrug, he took a half-turn, opened the door and went back into the cabin. Nor did he come out again. . . .

Returning to the quarter-deck, and right disconsolate at being there alone, Louis Guénolé firmly pressed back the bitterness swelling his heart. Around him nothing had changed during the minute that had elapsed. The convoy was coming about with a great flapping of sail, driving on in disorder, all canvas set, and the escort, fear-

ful of leaving the merchantmen behind—for these last are never so fast as warships—had taken in spritsails and topgallants. The *Belle Hermine*, faster than any of the King's ships, kept pace with all sails reefed but her tops'ls.

The enemy was not yet in sight. Neither was the coast to be seen. Banks of fog still hovered over the sea, and the breeze, although freshening, did not clear them away, for no sooner was one driven off than another came running to take its place. Nevertheless, however few and brief the moments of clearing might be, they yet occurred at intervals and lasted long enough at times to allow a bit of horizon line to come into view. Whereupon Louis lost no time in turning his spyglass, which he rarely laid down, on the rift in the encircling fog.

"Once more—nothing!" he murmured after a new examination.

It was towards the west that he peered most intently, for that was to windward, and, calculating the probabilities of attack, he concluded that the Holland rats would appear from that quarter.

"There's more room for manœuvring yonder," he mused, "for from here to Cotentin, there are fifteen or sixteen leagues of open sea, and what with the depth, there's room for many a squadron. If those twelve or fifteen ships make toward us from that quarter, sailing free, they'd have besides the advantage of the wind. . . ."

Suddenly, he broke off in his calculations.

"Ho!" said he, aloud, "what's this? Yonder's a grand show of bunting! Can't these fine gentlemen of the royal fleet live an hour without running up every flag they have gear for?"

The Sieur de Gabaret's ship—the *Français*, which led the squadron, hauling close to the wind a quarter of a league ahead, had, as a matter of fact, just run up numerous ensigns by way of signalling to her two consorts, the *Hazardeux* and the *Maline*. At the same time

it fired three cannon-shots, the three puffs of smoke showing white as snow against the muddy fog. An imperious command that must have been, for Louis Guénolé saw the two ships that had been thus summoned instantly put up full sail and set their helms hard on the flagship of the squadron.

Uncertain as to what position he should himself take up, Louis caught sight of the *Maline*, opportunely approaching to cross the stern of the *Belle Hermine* and sailing pretty close to her, the sooner to gain the wind. On the quarter-deck stood the captain in person, the Chevalier de Rosmadec. At sight of Louis, the chevalier raised his speaking trumpet to his lips:

"Corsair, ahoy! . . . The Dutch are yonder, west-southwest. We're giving battle, to gain time. You of the convoy meanwhile are to escape, helm hard on Havre de Grâce, which is no great distance."

The *Maline* was already moving off, ready for combat. Louis measured her with a long glance. She was a frigate, much lighter in scantling than the *Français* or the *Hazardeux*, which were ships of the line, the one carrying forty-eight, and the other, forty-four cannon. The *Maline* carried but twenty-four, and of smaller calibre. With her twenty bronze cannon the *Belle Hermine* nearly equalled the larger frigate.

"What does this marigold take us for?" growled Louis, greatly offended. "Does he think he's seen more fighting than we have? And does he or does he not know why Thomas Trublet no longer ago than day before yesterday accepted the invitation to join the King's squadron with our *Belle Hermine*?"

As he spoke, he went towards the helmsman. Then, with his own hand, he set the helm hard on, and gave orders to tighten the cordage. The next moment the *Belle Hermine*, responding instantly, tacked into the wind, and was making good speed toward the admiral's ship.

Once more Louis Guénolé, leaving the quarterdeck, went back to the cabin, and drawing close to the door, touched it with a finger. But he did not dare knock this time, and soon, hearing no sound issue from the captain's room, he turned on his heel and went away on tiptoe.

Now at the very moment when he was climbing the steps to the poop-deck, a sort of thunder-clap, rolling heavily in the distance, smote his ears. Bounding like a horse under the spur, Louis in a twinkling reached the taffrail. Peering about from that vantage point, he at first could not descry the enemy. But he beheld the flagship surrounded with puffs of smoke, like so many snowy plumes, and the *Hazardeux* likewise, the latter having caught up with its consort. Doubtless, the Holland rats were arriving and could already be made out in that quarter.

Six cables' lengths ahead of the *Belle Hermine*, the *Maline* was standing off on a long tack in order to take up her position behind the two ships of the line. Louis kept on the same tack he had taken, awaiting developments.

And the developments came. From the mist, semi-transparent, semi-opaque, undulating in great spirals, one, two, three, six, eight, nine, great whitish forms loomed almost simultaneously, like prodigious phantoms suddenly rising out of the sea—the Dutch fleet. . . . Louis had scarcely time to count them; already five of them, bearing to larboard, were throwing themselves in the path of the two ships of the King of France, while the four behind these, driving to starboard until they had the wind full abeam, came on in wild disorder, every-one for himself, free to manœuvre, and the sea open before them, dashing *pêle-mêle*, all four of them, to cut off the fleeing convoy.

But to accomplish this, the four Dutchmen, accustomed to giving chase to merchantmen who could put up no defence, should in the first place have disposed of a nobler adversary, though hardly less frail: the little frigate,

the *Maline*, had bravely taken up her position across their path, and barred the progress of the Dutch ships. A frigate, however, is, against four ships in combat, as a child, with wooden sword and sling-shot, might be to four dragoons or musketeers, with regulation equipment. The four Dutchmen, all of them great sea-dogs, prepared for set battle, with a triple row of batteries each, could scarcely make more than a mouthful of the Chevalier de Rosmadec in his frail nutshell.

And was it for the *Belle Hermine* to meddle in such a contest, lost in advance? Would it not be the wiser part to join the flagship, which, at least, could not fail to offer a doughty resistance to the enemy? Louis Guénolé hesitated.

But, at the same instant, action was beginning in another quarter. And Louis, brave as ever he had been—that is to say, with something of excess, straightway forgot all calculation and prudence, and instinctively ran to the nearest cannon.

The *Français* and the *Hazardeux* were fighting off to starboard, a half-league away, the *Maline* hard ahead, within less than six cables lengths. The *Bell Hermine*, all sails set, sprang to the support of the King's frigate, which already was giving way under the fire of its formidable aggressors.

## CHAPTER V

"LOAD cannon, starboard!" commanded Louis Guénolé, when the *Belle Hermine* had come to within twenty-four hundred yards of the enemy.

The gunners to larboard left their places and ran to lend a hand to their comrades on the starboard side, that the loading might proceed the faster.

"Bring down her masts," commanded Louis.

Against these ships of the line a broadside wasn't worth the trouble of firing it; the meagre cannon-balls of the *Belle Hermine* could barely have cut through the paint of their great oaken hulls, so solidly timbered, and reenforced besides; whereas a pretty little shot aimed to nip off the mast, fired from a cannon pointing upward as neat as your thumb, had a good chance to bring masts, yards, sail, cordage tumbling to the deck, in a trice making of the most powerful triple-decker afloat a helpless bit of flotsam.

"And now, master-gunners, by all the saints of Paradise, aim to hit!"

An oath from Louis Guénolé! So rare an event was this that a shudder ran through the crew.

Already the Dutch flagship had come within range.

"Broadside!" commanded Louis.

The ten mouths uttered but one great roar.

For twenty seconds there was no more chance of seeing anything on the deck of the *Belle Hermine* than in an oven. Thick smoke enveloped the whole frigate.

Louis coughed, choking. But, as he leaned still farther over the rail, blinking, in an attempt to discover, through the smoke, the manœuvres of the enemy, the planking of the poop deck creaked under a heavy tread, and a voice more violent than the echo of the cannon thundered:

"Bear down! *Tonnerre du Diable!*"

With a joyful start, Louis turned, and beheld Thomas.

At sound of the captain's voice—master of the ship was he, after God—the helmsman and the mizzentopman obeyed instinctively. Steering less close to the wind, the *Belle Hermine* in a quarter of a minute doubled, then tripled, her speed. In the instant following those fifteen seconds, a deafening detonation—the roar of sixty great cannon, firing simultaneously, rent the air; a squall of enormous cannon-balls cut loose in a swarm like a hundred thousand cockchafers. The ship of the line had answered with one of her deadly broadsides. But that particular broadside was destined to miss its mark by a good margin, and did no more than riddle the sea, falling thick as hail into the frigate's wake, within a hundred and twenty yards of her stern; for the *Belle Hermine* was still, luckily, masked by her own smoke; and the Dutch gunners, who could see their mark only through an opaque cloud—as well say they couldn't see anything, not even the main-truck—had aimed their shots by conjecture and fired in the same fashion, basing their calculations on the speed which their now invisible target had seemed to possess awhile back. Thus did Thomas's ruse succeed to the full measure of his expectations.

Then the *Belle Hermine* issued intact from the smoke that so well had protected her, and the battle-field appeared before Thomas's eyes. To larboard, the convoy was in full flight, every inch of canvas spread, to make good their escape. To starboard, Messieurs de Gabaret and d'Harteloire were fighting valiantly, their two fine ships holding up the advance of the entire flock of the enemy—those same five adversaries who had been the first

to attack—bringing their five ships into action against two, expecting thereby promptly to gain a victory. And now that twenty or thirty broadsides had been exchanged, not a single one of them dared draw back from its companions by so much as a foot-length, for fear of seeing them, so soon as they were reduced in number from five to four, vanquished in a twinkling, and forced to surrender. Nearer at hand, in the waters about the *Belle Hermine*, the four other Dutchmen were doing their best to manœuver in such fashion as to give effective chase to the convoy. But, of these four, the brave *Maline* still held the largest at bay; and another—the one which had a short time before fired a broadside at Thomas—was still enveloped in the cloud of her own smoke, just as the frigate had been. There remained then the last two, both intent on taking up a position across the *Belle Hermine's* bows.

"*Ça!*" said Thomas as his gunners were reloading, "what kind of a thing is that these cursed dogs have there, hoisted to their masthead?"

Louis turned his spy-glass on the Dutchmen.

"*Ma Doué!*" said he.

"Speak, can't you! What is it?"

"What now, *corps-Dieu?*"

"A broom! . . ."

Thomas, suddenly white with rage, turned twice on his heel, as though seeking prompt vengeance wherever it might lie. Finally, he raised his eyes toward his own mainmast.

"By the Christ of the Ravelin!" he swore, half-choking, "and my emblem, where is it?"

"Your emblem?" said Guénolé.

"Yes, the Devil hoof you! My scarlet ensign, my blood-red flag; bearing the golden lamb, that's to tell these blackguards my real name! Run it up, I tell you!"

Two new members of the crew, startled by the captain's fierce glare, made a dash for the flag-chest. A second

later, the "Lamb"—more greatly feared throughout the eleven provinces than plague or violent death—was snapping in the breeze.

"Larboard your helm!" roared Thomas, savagely. "Prepare to tack! Gather in the mizzen, clew up your spritsail!"

The crew made haste to obey, though in utter bewilderment. Louis Guénolé himself did not at first understand this strange order which would place the *Belle Hermine*, and for a sufficiently long time at that, bow to the wind, with no headway, and hard to steer—and all within a cable-length from the bows of the two Dutchmen who had not as yet opened fire! They were just arriving on the field of action, running neck and neck, wind abeam, their towering new sails swollen like so many bursting wine-skins, their openwork figureheads plunging into the frothing waves at each forward lunge. Already the black mouths of their cannon, pointed at long range, could be made out. Another minute, and they were overhauling the frigate, catching her between cross-fire, grinding her to shreds under their triple broadsides, that were four or five times as heavy as the volleys from the *Belle Hermine's* single row of guns, frail weapons for such a fight, even as the frigate herself was frail.

But again Thomas was roaring his commands:

"Load your guns there to starboard! Master-gunners, *hardi*, now! Aim close, every shot for the masts! And take your time! Larboard topmen, to the rigging! Starboard your helm, hard! Let out your reefs, gather in your spritsail! Clew up the mizzen! Clew up the main-sheet! Master gunners, 'tention! Fire!"

This time the crew understood. And a great shouting arose, that could be heard above the fracas of the guns. Thomas l'Agnelet had not put about! But he had pretended to, and once more had fooled the enemy! For the Dutch, seeing the frigate motionless, had not luffed as a precaution against her possible manœuvre, and, by not

luffing, had been prevented from opening up their irresistible batteries too soon. The *Belle Hermine*, her broadside delivered, now fell back on a starboard tack, and instead of passing between the ships, threw herself under the bowsprit of one of them. The latter, through the smoke, could make out nothing but tongues of flame—or less even. And thus it ran head-on to the frigate, so violently that it shattered its boom, spritsail, bobstays, and figurehead, and, in addition, snapped many a forestay, shroud, and backstay. The foretops'l came tumbling down, dragging with it the gallant, maintops'l, and mizzentop—as well say the whole rigging, and have done with it, for as everyone knows, the bowsprit is its keystone, and when it is gone the whole structure crumbles. The *Belle Hermine* likewise suffered grievously from the shock. Her own tops'ls came down, all three of them. Nevertheless, she had the advantage, and it was no small one. Hooked on as she now was under the ship's prow, she could discharge her starboard guns into its timbers, so soon as she could load again, whereas the Dutchman could bombard her with not a single one of his cannon.

Thomas, laughing as he alone knew how to laugh, with all his vast throat and lungs, cast at Louis a triumphant grimace which laid bare all his teeth under his up-curled lips.

"Do you see how this ship is offering itself no more nor less than our gold-laden galleon once did?"

Louis gave a shrug.

"Yes," said he. "But on yonder ship we'll not find much gold to make us rich."

"No!" Thomas answered, still laughing. "It's himself would grow rich more likely, if perchance he captured us."

He was laughing louder than ever; then, advancing to the very midst of the St. Malo gunners, who were reloading with canister-shot:

"Quick, boys!" said he. "Fire! And now, every man

of you, get out your axes, pikes, and swords! For I'm making you a present of this Dutchman, my lads! Go and get him!"

Thus he spoke, thinking it was his Filibusters of former years he addressed, or, belike, his own Corsairs of yore, that had ever been overjoyed to fight, ten men against a hundred, resolved to win or perish. But his present crew was made of different stuff—good lads, yes, and St. Malo boys too; but nevertheless, peaceable lads, sailors of trading-ships, not men-of-war's men, and brave only when they could not be otherwise. Wherefore, at Thomas's proposal that they board and capture a ship three times the size of their frigate, they hesitated.

And Thomas saw that they were hesitating.

With one bound, he leapt back to the topgallant bulwark, and, back against it, faced every man of his crew. Two steel pistols gleamed in his outstretched fists.

"Dogs!" he roared, his voice terrible as his eyes, "cringing dogs that you are! Listen to me! Poor as lice you are, Job was no poorer. And Crœsus was no richer than I, who stand here before you. You have nothing to risk, save your dirty hides. I have seven hundred thousand pounds in gold in my captain's coffers! Your wives and your girls are safe in your villages. My girl is here, shot and shell flying around her. Yet it was I who awhile ago chose to risk this battle, where I have nothing to gain, and everything to lose. But now, I tell you, it is you who are going to fight, I swear it by my blood-red flag that's floating above us there! Dogs, cringing curs, board that ship! Board it, I say, or with these hands of mine I'll . . ."

He did not end his sentence. His eyes, flashing like deadly lightning, finished it for him, and the two upraised pistols gave a terribly precise meaning to his threat.

At the same moment some Dutch soldiers, freeing themselves from the heaps of sail and rigging that had fallen to the deck, were beginning to gather on the forecastle,

and opened up a vigourous musketry fire on the lads of the *Belle Hermine*. At the first volley, four St. Malo boys fell to the deck. Caught between this fire and Thomas's pistols, and by this brutal persuasion convinced that death surrounded them on every side, and that willy-nilly they must win the fight or die on the spot, these gentle lambs resigned themselves to playing a savage part. Heads down, growling with fear and rage combined, in a rush they scaled the side of the great ship that lowered over the frigate much as a cathedral looms over the parsonage nestling on its flank. By good luck, the two shattered masts, fallen across one another, made a foot-bridge, not difficult for sailors to cross. Barely a quarter of a minute had elapsed when Thomas, remaining alone in the midst of his deserted poop-castle, saw his men on the enemy's quarter-deck, hurling themselves, with the fury of desperation, on the Dutch soldiery.

And then Thomas, reassured as to the progress made in this quarter, climbed onto the heaped-up wreckage and inspected the field of battle.

Matters were no worse. On the contrary. Thomas made out the convoy, now a good distance away and still in full flight. From now on one might deem it safe, for the battle was still in progress around the Sieur de Gabaret, who continued, with his two ships, to keep the five Dutchmen busy. Not one of them had succeeded in freeing itself from the rude embrace in which they were enveloped. And, in addition, in the opposite part of the field of action not a single one of the four other hostile ships—those that had attacked the *Maline* and the *Belle Hermine*—was in condition effectively to pursue the lucky convoy. Each of the two frigates held one of the four in a close grip, and the other two, both of which had received broadsides from the *Belle Hermine*—broadsides judiciously calculated to bring down their masts—had lost, the one its mainmast, the second its mizzen, and

were now proceeding at too slow a pace to be formidable in pursuit. The unfortunate *Maline*, truth to tell, was reduced to naught, for her captain had not known how to board the Dutchman as skilfully as Thomas had done. But, vanquished and broken as she now appeared, after so boldly defying her adversary's terrible artillery, and at such close range—the royal frigate had none the less so vigourously engaged her and, as one might say, wrapped itself about the adversary that for an hour at least the larger ship could not hope to get clear so as to take up the chase again.

"We couldn't ask for better, eh Louis?" cried Thomas, restored to serenity. Guénolé, still standing at his post, by the taffrail in front of the helm, looked up.

As his captain spoke, the door of the poop-castle opened, and Juana appeared.

Juana, very handsome in her most resplendent dress of gold-encrusted brocade, hair piled high, powdered, and painted like any court lady—arrayed, in short, as though she were going to a ball, instead of a battle—advanced calmly down the deck. Shots were bursting out momentarily. Grape-shot, small-shot, and langrage were whistling through the air. But, doubtless, at the siege of Ciudad Real the damsel had formed a taste for this music, for she heeded it no more than a snap of the finger, and came disdainfully toward Thomas, who, at seeing her exposing herself thus to the cannon, could not breathe for emotion.

"*Eh bien!*" said she, "and haven't you made an end of this yet? And yonder ship, is it still waiting to be captured?"

Thomas, motionless, as though turned to stone, stared, eyes fixed upon her. And now she shrugged, pouting like a fine lady who is bored beyond bearing.

"It's very tedious," said she. "What a poor sort of fight! And you, now, what are you doing here alone?"

He removed his plumed hat, bowing low, then threw it on the ground:

"I was just leaving," he replied, and said no more.

And walking with measured tread, as she had done, he went straight toward the enemy's ship, and ascended to its deck, with no haste, but tranquilly, sword in scabbard.

At this very moment the Dutch, rallying at last, as they emerged to the light of day from the midst of the fallen rigging, were beginning to drive back, and right vigourously, the St. Malo lads who were but a third as numerous. The *Belle Hermine* it was now which ran some risk of being boarded and captured. But, on the poop-castle, behind his sailors who were about to turn tail before the enemy, Thomas suddenly loomed.

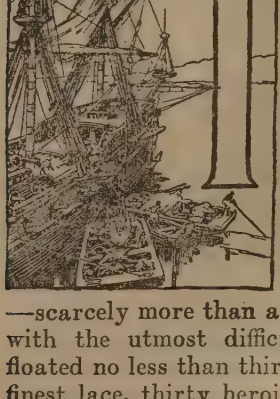
"*L'Agnelet à la rescousse!*" cried he.

And, his calmness then suddenly giving way to the most terrible and deadly fury, he leapt into the midst of the enemy, striking, slashing, lunging in so formidable a fashion that even the boldest of his opponents drew back, and the aspect of the battle suddenly changed. Drunk with the blood he had spilt, and carrying his men along with him in his frenzy, Thomas in a twinkling won back the advantage. As before, on board the galleon, he was seen charging the vanquished, driving them before him the length of the deck, and hurling them down the main-hatch, which swallowed them up, every man of them howling with panic.

And Thomas himself plunged in behind them, still roaring with all his lungs:

"*L'Agnelet à la rescousse! L'Agnelet! L'Agnelet!*"

## CHAPTER VI



IT was on that same evening, at sundown, that the burghers of Havre-de-Grâce, drawn to their ramparts and jetty-heads by the sound of distant cannonading, witnessed a rare and glorious spectacle—to wit, a frigate, her mast almost gone, limping into port under a few rags of sail, with two ships of the line in tow, both shorn as clean of masts and rigging as a pontoon—scarcely more than a triple wreck, in short, navigating with the utmost difficulty. But above this wreckage floated no less than thirty emblems, as full of holes as the finest lace, thirty heroic flags, with which the victorious admiral had proudly adorned the triumphal ruins he was bringing into port with him. Breaking out into cries of the wildest enthusiasm, the burghers threw down their hats in salutation to those tattered emblems. Royal standards were there, of white satin embroidered with the golden Fleurs-de-Lys, standards of St. Malo, blue bunting these, quartered with blood-red scarlet; and, above all the others, like a great torch, its flames tossing in the evening breeze, there flew a splendid rag of sombre crimson on which, amid a hundred rents, was displayed a mysterious heraldic beast that the burghers of Havre took to be a lion.

Thus arrived safe in port, behind the escaped convoy, the forever memorable squadron commanded by the brave Sieur de Gabaret. A cannon-ball had robbed him of his right arm, but he was destined not to die of a wound so honourably won.

Only the *Maline* alas! was lacking in the roll-call, having finally succumbed to the unequal duel she had so long sustained against the most powerful of the enemy's ships. The battle had terminated in this wise. Exhausted and battered by four hours of stubborn fighting, the Dutch, seeing that the convoy they had vainly pursued had escaped them, retired in good order, contenting themselves with this scant success—a frigate of twenty-four guns riddled by a triple-decker carrying eighty cannon! Their own losses had been much heavier—to wit, a vessel of the line, captured by Thomas and then burned, lest it be recaptured by the enemy. Of the remaining eight, all had suffered serious damage—masts and yards splintered, hulls smashed in, prows torn away, poops shattered and gaping. It would scarcely have been possible for vessels thus maimed to continue fighting. And thus Messieurs de Gabaret and d'Harteloire had remained unvanquished after the retreat of the enemy's squadron. But never could their ships, a hundred times more seriously injured than the Dutch craft, have reached the French coast, if Thomas l'Agnelet, himself a victor, and freed of his prize by the burning of it, had not as best he could run up some spare sails, and then come to take the two captains of the King in tow.

At nightfall the *Belle Hermine* and behind her the *Hazardeux* and the *Français* crossed the tide-gate into the port, at the slack, the Commander of the Arsenal showing them where all three could safely cast anchor, each putting out four cables. Louis Guénolé then had leisure to take breath, and to rest; for, since dawn, he had ceased working only to fight, and fighting only to toil. Thomas, as soon as the enemy was vanquished, had promptly shut himself up in his cabin, in company with Juana his love, who, no more than he, though so boldly exposing herself to the enemy's fire, had the slightest scratch to show for it. This in the case of Thomas, who,

head down, had plunged into the enemy's ranks as a diver plunges into the sea, seemed really cause for believing that his name—that "l'Agnelet," that he threw before him as a war-cry—had the magic effect of a talisman.

"And I wish I felt sure," murmured the anxious Guénolé, now retired into his own cabin where, though he had not as yet eaten or drunk anything, the whole day long, he supped but frugally—"I wish I felt sure that this talisman of his had nothing to do with the Evil One. . . ."

As Louis Guénolé was thus communing with himself, voices were heard on the quay near by, and one of them, in imperious tones, hailed the *Belle Hermine*. Louis, opening his port-hole, perceived diverse groups of people, some of them bearing lanterns.

"*Hola!*" said he in turn. "Who goes there? And what do you want?"

A man in a wide-brimmed hat came to the very edge of the quay:

"We are the officers and crew of the ship *Français* whom you so obligingly towed into port," said he. "And our Commodore, who is here also, desires to have speech at once with the Sieur Trublet, l'Agnelet, as he is called, the captain of this frigate."

Louis, his eyes growing accustomed to the darkness, descried a sort of litter, borne by four of the ship's crew on their shoulders.

"Ho!" said he promptly. "*Certes*, nothing is easier. Will you have the skiff?"

"No," said the man in the big hat, "for our Commodore is grievously wounded and could not use it. But, even in the condition in which he is, he prays Captain Trublet, known as l'Agnelet, to accept his apologies, and to do him the favour to come ashore in person."

"So be it!" said Louis.

And he ran to advise Thomas of the event.

Thomas, somewhat sulky at being disturbed in the inti-

mate pastimes he prized more highly, doubtless, than an interview with an aged and disabled Commodore, nevertheless deemed it but courteous not to keep the persons of importance who had come to pay him their compliments waiting too long. He made haste therefore; and it was with the utmost respect that, a short time later, he saluted the noble invalid, who lay helpless in the hollow of the litter. In the flickering light of the lantern he then perceived his visitor to be a gentleman with a bristling grey moustache, of a pale but energetic and resolute visage.

This gentleman, Monsieur de Gabaret, with great effort raising himself until he was propped on his elbow, spoke thus:

"Sir," said he, "although but freshly amputated, I desired to offer you this very evening my warm thanks for the good succour you afforded to-day, to myself and my escort. Without you, without your frigate, God knows where my ship would be at this present hour!"

Though offering no word in reply, Thomas bowed low a second time. Such praise, no matter what his humour, tickled him, nevertheless, in his most sensitive spot.

"For this, sir," continued the Commodore, "I am your servant, and I am proud to say that I am beholden to you. Speak then, for I am at your orders. I enjoy some little credit in the world, and I should be delighted to be of service to you. Will you allow me the privilege?"

He was looking Thomas straight in the eye. But Thomas, half-dumbfounded with surprise, and half-embarrassed, continued silent, breathing not a word.

"Good!" said Monsieur de Gabaret, trying to smile but accomplishing only a grimace, for the stump of his severed right arm was causing him great pain. "I see where the shoe pinches. You are, monsieur, a Corsair, and, doubtless, this frigate which you so nobly lent in the King's service, represents the fairest part of your fortune. If it be so, have no fear! His Majesty will not suffer

that a brave man should lose jot or tittle through having fought to save the honour of a royal squadron. By St. Louis, my noble patron! I shall in the King's name purchase your *Belle Hermine* of you, and gladly pay twice over the price it once cost you when new."

This time Thomas could do no less than reply.

"Monsieur l'Amiral," said he, for the third time removing his hat, "I am at your service, with all my heart. But, in the first place this frigate is not mine. I am only its captain, in the service of my bourgeois, Monsieur le Chevalier Danycan, who is a very rich man. But I too am rich, and even more so than he, for, to say nothing of my other goods, won these several years past at corsairing, I have here, in the coffers within my cabin, more than seven hundred thousand gold pounds, in good ringing heavy gold pieces, all of which are my own, and owing to nobody."

"Seven hundred thousand pounds!" exclaimed Monsieur de Gabaret, dumbfounded.

"Or as much," affirmed Thomas, proudly.

With the single hand remaining to him, the Commodore pulled his grizzled moustache.

"Seven hundred thousand pounds in gold!" he repeated, as though incredulous. "Monsieur, where did you obtain such a treasure?"

Thomas laid his left fist on his hip.

"In Ciudad Real de la Nouvelle Grenade," he replied, "a Spanish city which I took by assault, I, with diverse Filibusters, my friends, and which I pillaged as was fitting. At this moment you could not find there one stone upon another."

The word "Filibusters" had its effect. Monsieur de Gabaret no longer doubted what he heard. But all the more did he marvel. Then, wide-eyed with amazement as he gazed at the Corsair, he resumed, speaking slowly and with the utmost gravity:

"And thus, monsieur," said he, "you had on board

your frigate, during the battle of a few hours ago, as at present, seven hundred thousand pounds in gold belonging to you? And notwithstanding, you did not at all hesitate to take part in a redoubtable combat from which you might so easily have withdrawn, had you so wished? By my faith! You are brave not to have done so! For you risked a heavy sum in the game. Vanquished, captured, you would have lost everything at a stroke, fortune and liberty. . . . And perhaps, in your home at St. Malo, you have wife and children awaiting you, and counting on these riches which you are bringing them?"

"Vanquished? Captured?" repeated Thomas, boldly bursting into one of his full-throated laughs. "Eh! Monsieur l'Amiral, what creatures are these? Never have I heard them mentioned, nor my crew either, in the five years during which we have been pursuing the King's enemies on every sea! . . . As to children, I have none; as to wife, I have one through God's favour, but not in my home at St. Malo, since she sleeps here, in my own cabin, and a while ago, took her fair share in our combat. . . ."

With a start the old Commodore lifted himself on his arm as though about to leap down from his litter:

"*Hein?*" said he. "Monsieur, your wife was awhile ago on board your frigate? You attacked the enemy when your wife was by your side?"

"Truly," said Thomas. "And even, the better to mock the Dutch rats, she put on her finest dress of gold brocade, two pounds of powder on her head, and rouge two feet thick on each cheek!"

Monsieur de Gabaret fell back in his litter:

"Monsieur," said he, "the King shall hear of this!"

## CHAPTER VII

NTERING through the wrought-iron gate, the coach rolled along down a well-sanded and majestic *allée*. As he leaned out of the window Thomas saw on every hand lofty trees that gave the royal park the appearance of a wood. Leafless now, the boughs were covered with hoar-frost, and here and there puddles sheeted with ice showed white against the brown earth. A delicate lacework of branches and twigs veiled the sky, and, in the centre of a crossroads Thomas caught sight of a marble basin from which a fountain gushed, its waters falling back in elaborate cascades to the floating icicles of the pool. Farther on, three tame does, at sound of the horses' hoofs, stopped browsing but did not flee into the forest. Restrained and serene, a splendid magnificence reigned over the region. And Thomas, hardened as he was by so many years of the roughest and in truth most savage seafaring, was nevertheless singularly sensible of his surroundings.

He kept silence, not knowing what to say, or not daring to speak. Without a word, he continued gazing at the frost-clad copses, the still verdant ivy, and the statues standing at intervals along the entire length of the noble and solitary avenues.

Monsieur de Gabaret, the wounded Commodore, reclining on the back seat beside Thomas, then took up the conversation that had been interrupted as the equippage drove into the royal park:

"Monsieur," said he, with the marked courtesy he always displayed toward Thomas, "since this is the first time you have travelled to this spot, I congratulate myself greatly on the honour that is mine in being able to serve you as guide. We are now in St. Germain itself, and you will soon see the château and the terrace, admitted by all who behold them to be pure marvels. It was in this fine dwelling that the King was born, thirty years ago on the third of September of this year—1678—I remember it as though it were yesterday, although I was a green stripling at that time, already so long past. . . . Alas, monsieur, the present age does not equal that one! Not, indeed, that I dare in the slightest degree cast reflections on the brilliant events that make our present reign illustrious! But the splendours of to-day in no way efface from my memory the gentle beauties of yesterday. . . . Look now! consider the château just coming into view from among the lindens, consider the terrace we are approaching, and tell me if there is anything in the world comparable to them! Well now, monsieur, I will tell you in strict confidence, that His Majesty does not like St. Germain! . . . Instead, our King prefers a deplorable spot, sandy and swampy both, known as Versailles, and for which, it seems, St. Germain is sooner or later to be abandoned! Confess, monsieur, that such desertion will be a lamentable thing, and that old folk such as I, who have here a store of all the most cherished memories of their youth, will have good reason to be distressed no longer to find, in this noble setting, the pomp and royal majesty you are shortly to behold!"

On the instant the coach, turning sharply into a sumptuous esplanade, came to a stop, and the Commodore descended from it, leaning with his one arm on Thomas's shoulder; then the latter also stepped to the ground.

"Here we are, monsieur, at our destination," said Monsieur de Gabaret, dismissing the coach. "And it is

to this very spot that the King is to come shortly, when I shall have the pleasure of presenting you to him, in accordance with the command he has deigned to give me. We shall not have long to wait, for we have only by a little anticipated the appointed hour, and no one in the world is more rigourously exact than His Majesty. Wind nor rain, heat nor cold, ever prevents him from taking his accustomed walk in his gardens and buildings on every single day that God dispenses to him. However, we shall from afar see the cortege approaching, and in the meanwhile nothing prevents your admiring the view to be obtained from this vantage point."

From the top of the terrace the view did, indeed, extend over a plain of the utmost magnificence and variety imaginable. There a wide river traced its silver windings, and Thomas learned from Monsieur de Gabaret that this river was that very Seine which waters Paris. In the distance church spires rose above the tufted tree clumps, and farther on, a thickly wooded mountain screened the capital where Thomas had arrived two days before, and by which he was still, after two days, right thoroughly astounded, so much had the great city amazed him by its prodigious extent, by the crowds of people there to be met with, and the unprecedented hubbub there made. . . . In very truth, the Indies of America were less different from St. Malo than was this extraordinary city of Paris.

Suddenly, from his brain, Thomas felt every single thought fly away as a flock of sea-gulls flies at the shot of a cannon; for Monsieur de Gabaret had abruptly touched him on the shoulder, murmuring the single, all-powerful phrase—

"The King!"

Instinctively, Thomas removed his hat. The Commodore already stood bare-headed. A dazzling and precipitate cortege was issuing from the château; horses, coaches, retinues of liveried servants, a confused multitude of people were all running with a great clamour as

though trying to surround a small group of nobles, magnificently dressed, who went ahead, followed by a picket of musketeers and body-guards. Scarlet coats embroidered with gold crosses shone dazzling the eye, gold galloons and lace glittered in the clear light. To Thomas, who stood watching, with beating heart and open mouth, it seemed as though, in a twinkling, the sun had pierced through the grey bank of clouds, scattering its rays over all the park and château. . . .

The cortege was mounting the terrace. Thomas could now distinguish faces in the nearest group. Among the courtiers who came first one man stood out, taller than the others, of heavier build, and more majestic bearing. As he recognized the haughty features, the piercing eye, and proud nose, Thomas trembled. This was the King, exactly as he was represented on the medals and in the pictures Thomas had so often perused with never a thought that he would one day have the extraordinary honour of seeing face to face the original of such portraits, in themselves held in such reverence by the populace.

The King was approaching. Monsieur de Gabaret moved to the edge of the terrace, and had to make a sign to Thomas that he was to do likewise, for, out of sheer emotion, the latter was lingering in the very path of royalty. Only the creak of the sand underfoot broke the profound stillness. For not a courtier dared open his mouth; even the birds in the royal park were mysteriously still as though out of respect for the advancing monarch.

Within six paces of His Majesty, Monsieur de Gabaret, taking his time for the salutation, made a profound bow. Thomas, who had been practising this courtesy, bowed likewise, with just enough presence of mind to remember that he must imitate exactly every gesture of the old Commodore, lest he fall short in some point of etiquette. And the King, right courteously, raised his hand to his hat, and stopped.

The rest was for Thomas like the visions of a dream, of which one keeps a memory both confused and imperishable. Monsieur de Gabaret paid his compliments to the King, of which compliments Thomas heard not a syllable. But, at the King's reply, Thomas suddenly recovered his hearing, and every word of the royal speech inscribed itself ineffaceably in his memory. For the King was saying:

"I am always well-pleased to see the brave gentlemen who so nobly uphold against all my enemies the honour of my army and the reputation of France."

And again, a little later, he said:

"So this is that Corsair hero of whom you spoke to me? *Certes*, he hath a good appearance! But is it really true that he has accomplished all the miracles you reported to me? And has not your own modesty attributed to him many a brave deed that should in all honesty be attributed to yourself?"

Thomas, this time, perceived that it was the Commodore's voice replying.

"*Par la Croix Dieu! sire*," protested he, "I would willingly take my oath to it! Captain of the lightest of frigates, this gentleman here before you so rudely handled three Dutch ships that two of them were put to flight by himself alone, while the third he boarded and captured, finally setting fire to it; whereupon, rigging his injured frigate as best he could—and it was in such condition as Your Majesty can well believe—he did not hesitate to advance into the very thick of the battle to come to the succour and deliverance of Monsieur d'Harteloire and myself. May Heaven confound me if I lie by a single word!"

"I did not doubt your sincerity," said the King, "but it gives me great pleasure to hear you repeat the matter once more."

He looked at Thomas. And under the fire of his Sovereign's glance, Thomas felt his knees give way, and

every drop of blood in his cheeks flow back to his heart.

"Monsieur," the King continued, addressing Thomas in person, "monsieur, I know that you are possessed of worldly goods, and that it is not self-interest which prompts you. I desire, however, to give you a mark of the esteem in which I hold you. Tell me then, monsieur; up to the present hour have you enjoyed the privileges accorded those who rank as gentlemen?"

Vainly did Thomas try to answer. His parched throat strangled the words he tried to utter. He could do no more than shake his head from left to right, bowing the while as he had seen Monsieur de Gabaret bow each time he had replied to the King.

"Of such rank are you now," said the King.

He made a sign to one of the nobles standing bare-headed behind him. The latter advanced, and swept the very ground in his salutation as he presented to His Majesty a roll of parchment. With his own hand the King held it out to Thomas.

"On your knees," whispered Monsieur de Gabaret, just in time. And Thomas, ever more and more distraught, bent both knees, instead of merely one.

"For the honour of Our Nobility, it is fitting that men of valour such as yours should be ranked as nobles, and not as commoners. To these letters now conferred upon you I would add, monsieur, a commission as captain, in order that you may henceforth serve no other owner of privateers than myself. The rest concerns but you. Be assured, however, that it depends only on yourself not to stop halfway in so fine a career, for our navy has great need of good commodores, such as Monsieur de Gabaret was yesterday, and of lieutenants-general, such as he is to-day."

Monsieur de Gabaret drew back by as much as two steps in order to make his deepest bow. And, as he bowed, he whispered again to Thomas, still on his knees:

"Speak your thanks! . . . Thank His Majesty!"

And then Thomas, seeking desperately in every corner of his brain for a speech which would express at one and the same time his joy, his pride, and the overwhelming gratitude filling his heart, could find not a word. Yet, wishing nevertheless, in spite of everything, to express the sentiments making such tumult in his heart, he coughed twice, and then exclaimed in loud voice:

"Sire! Your Majesty has done well!"

# BOOK V

# THE NARROWING NEST

## CHAPTER I

ALO TRUBLET, comfortably ensconced in his new well-upholstered armchair, stretched a hand toward the oak table whereon rested a bowl still half full of sparkling Andalusian wine. Pure gold it was in color, and, mused old Malo, as the warmth of the draught ran through his veins, very like was this gold wine to the soft gold hair of Guillemette, Thomas's sister, now sitting beside her old father, busy with her embroidery, not too intent on her stitches, however, to chat with him now and again; and like it was too, he reflected, to the ringing fat gold coins that filled the cellar. Whereupon, rejoicing to the very marrow of his dry old bones, Malo Trublet brought his now empty bowl down with a smart rap on the table.

"*Pardieu!*" said he, "and are you not well-pleased, Guillemette, to be at this moment so well seamed with gold that even the lining of your cap glows with it?"

But, in silence, Guillemette gave merely a shrug that left some doubt as to her meaning, and became absorbed in her handiwork.

Then Malo Trublet turned to his wife, spinning, as ever, near the high, curtained window.

"*La mère!*" said he, "look and see what is the hour by the cuckoo-clock?"

Perrine Trublet got up, the better to distinguish the hands on the darkened clock face.

"Close on to six," said she.

"A good hour!" said the old man, more jubilant still. "Thomas will not be long in coming now; and, *ma foi!* I'm in haste for supper, there's an appetite here waiting for it!"

But Guillemette gave another shrug, plainly ironical. That Thomas would not be long in coming she doubted much. And not without good reason.

Indeed, in the four weeks since Thomas, returned once more to St. Malo, had taken his place again on the paternal hearth, frequent had been the occasions of his taking liberties with the family customs that formerly he had so strictly observed. Old Malo, full of indulgence for this son of his who had brought home such resplendent glory, and such fat riches to boot, willingly let him take the bit between his teeth. But, by a singular change of rôles, it was now Guillemette, formerly the accomplice of her brother's pranks and frolics, who assumed the severity the old man had laid by, growing increasingly irritable at seeing brother Thomas more independent and more grown up than she would have wished.

Excuse enough there was for him. What if Thomas l'Agnelet was not, in every particular, like the Thomas Trublet of the past? Six years of battles and victories easily accounted for that! And such an accounting the whole of St. Malo willingly accepted.

Truth to tell, Thomas had neglected in no slightest detail to show himself off to his fellow-citizens in the most favourable light. Vainglory, of course; but calculation also. Not for nothing did our hero carry two full parts of Norman blood in his veins. The very day of his return, for instance, had been a most superb and profitable occasion.

The *Belle Hermine*, brought to anchor at Havre-de-

Grâce on Christmas Day of 1677, in such damaged condition as we know, had, under the careful direction of the faithful Guénolé, taken three full months for repairs, caulking, masting, and the like. Thomas, meanwhile, summoned to the King's court, was there receiving signal marks of royal generosity. Whereupon, everything being once more in its accustomed order—that is to say, the frigate being now, thanks to Louis's efforts, as good as new from stem to stern—and Thomas, with Juana his love, having disported himself to his fill in all the finest taverns of the pleasant city of Havre, both captain and lieutenant agreed not to wait for peace to be declared, though this event was said to be close at hand, but boldly to set out once more and enter St. Malo under the very noses of the Dutch. Had they been less seasoned in courage, they might well have hesitated, for seventy ships of the United Provinces still held the Channel, under the command of a son of old Van Tromp. The English, too, were lending a hand, declaring war on us, and uniting their fleets with those of the Dutch, all out of hatred and jealousy of our great King. But England or Holland, or indeed, England and Holland combined, that was still all too little to inconvenience Thomas Trublet, Thomas l'Agnelet henceforth, when after six years' absence he elected to return to his home port. And the *Belle Hermine*, freshly careened, and thus faster sailing than ever, gave as little heed to heavy ships of the line as a herring does to a pippin.

In truth, Forts Colifichet and l'Eperon were actually rounded without setting off a single priming, although two great cruisers of the enemy, in the attempt more closely to blockade St. Malo, had stubbornly fired broadsides at the frigate as she scudded past the Pierre de Rance. Utterly scornful of them, Thomas had not deigned even to run up his terrible red flag.

And thus the good folk of St. Malo, summoned by the watch in the tower of Notre Dame, had at last been able,

from the end of the Vieux Quai, black with a clamourous throng, to gaze upon their glorious *Belle Hermine*, whose deeds, almost a legend now, had so long filled every mouth and assailed every ear. There she was now, as real as any ship in the harbor, fresh-painted and adorned with flags, and—as everyone knew—so laden with gold that it was like a miracle! And soon Thomas himself appeared, running his skiff ashore on the beach north of the Ravelin. And everyone rejoiced piously when, before entering under the arch of the bastion, he was seen to stop at the foot of the great bronze Christ, and linger there a long while in prayer, bare-headed, and knee to the ground, with never a thought lest he spoil the fine velvet of his breeches.

And when a lad was so good and brave, so pious, valiant, and rich to boot, couldn't he be forgiven for being still as in times past—or even more so!—a tippling wanton boon-companion, ever haunting tavern and drinking-bout? Messieurs of the town-guard willingly had pardoned him, abandoning all proceedings touching the death of poor Vincent Kerdoncuff, killed six years earlier in a duel, yes,—but a duel without witnesses!

As to Malo Trublet, he was certainly not in a mood to show himself more harsh than the rest of the townsfolk toward his son. Wherefore, with good-humoured patience, mellowed with further great draughts from wine jugs atwinkle with Spanish wine—of which the cellar was henceforth to be full—he presently with great serenity heard the cuckoo sing out six o'clock, and had never a thought of being angry, although Thomas had still not come home. Guillemette, however, got up and, dragging her feet so that what she did might be noted, went to examine the carved wooden hands of the old clock to call further attention to the fact that it was supper-time. But old Malo, who could be deaf when he chose,

turned away to look in another direction. And suddenly he called out:

"Guillemette! Come here, child, and read me this parchment again!"

With a gnarled old finger he was pointing to the certificate of nobility conferred upon Thomas by the King, and now hung in a frame on the wall. Much to Malo Trublet's taste it was to gaze and gaze again at these patents that conferred such deserved glory upon the family—and of hearing them read aloud he never wearied.

So that, willy-nilly, Guillemette was forced to read, omitting not a word:

Louis, *by the grace of God, King of France and of Navarre, to all present and to come, greeting.*

*The recent wars that We have been forced to maintain, having brought into full light the signal valour and capacity of the Sieur Thomas Trublet, Corsair Captain, of our good and faithful city of St. Malo; said Sieur Trublet having, since he has given his services to the Navy, captured, in West Indian waters and elsewhere, more than a hundred merchant vessels or Corsairs, navigating under the flag of the enemy; having captured likewise several Dutch and Spanish warships; and, finally, having saved the honour of our arms by fighting single-handed against a triple adversary, in a battle engaged in on Christmas Day in the year of grace one thousand six hundred and seventy-seven, near Havre-de-Grâce, and won by the courage and skilful manoeuvres of the same;*

*For these reasons, and desiring to give to the Sieur Trublet signal marks of our satisfaction in his good and loyal services, and to make public our affection for and esteem for subjects such as he, We do, by these presents, establish said Thomas Trublet among the ranks of Noble Men, with all the prerogatives attaching to this state, comprising seignorial rights and duties, high, middle, and low courts of justice, etc., etc. And We desire that the said Thomas Trublet receive the title of Sieur de l'Aguelet*

*—a name won and merited through the rare virtues of gentleness and humanity by which he has in combat been no less distinguished than by his bravery.*

*As coat of arms, said Thomas Trublet, Sieur de l'Agnelet, shall bear a shield, guled, with three ships, gold, rigged full sail on azure sea, with a lamb above, gold, flanked by two Fleurs-de-Lys of the same; the shield to be borne by two American aborigines leaning each on a mace, azure, strewn with Fleurs-de-Lys, gold; the shield surmounted with a crown of plumes, azure, gold, sinople, argent, and gules, a Fleur-de-Lys, gold, issuing from it as crest.*

*And we lay it upon our beloved and faithful counsellors, and such as hold our court of Parliament at Paris, in strict command, that they read, and cause to be published and registered, these presents, and give regard and observance to their every clause, according to the form and tenor of the same, notwithstanding all edicts, ordinances, regulations, and other letters to the contrary. For such is Our pleasure.*

*And in order that this decree should be affirmed and established forever, We herewith affix to it Our Hand and Seal.*

*Given out at St. Germain, in the month of January, in the year of grace one thousand six hundred and seventy-eight in the thirteenth year of Our Reign.*

*Signed,*

Louis.

And lower down: Signed by the King, Phelippeaux.

And beside this: Visé, Boucherat.

And above this: Approved by the Counsel.

Phelippeaux.

And sealed with the Great Seal in green wax.

Guillemette came to a stop.

"Are you sure you've skipped nothing?" asked her father, attentive to every syllable.

"Nothing," said she harshly.

Malo Trublet settled himself comfortably once more in his armchair. The cuckoo called out the half-hour.

"Lads who win letters such as those," said the old man, bringing both fists down on the carved oaken arms of his chair, "lads who win letters such as those have the right to sup full three-quarters of an hour past suppertime, an' it pleasure them!"

## CHAPTER II

S to Thomas Trublet, Sieur de l'Agnelet, those who imagined—simply because they did not see him about, or did not know where to find him—that he was roistering, wine-bibbing, wantoning, and haunting to excess every tavern in St. Malo, from the Drinking Magpie to the Tin Mug, such folk had not very good eyesight, and were in fact putting their fingers into their eyes up to the elbow, as the saying is.

But other folk there were who knew better, not depending on the gossip of old grannies. These others had sought more authentic information—from none others than the lads of Thomas's crew, now ashore—and thus they were not ignorant of the fact that on the very night following the arrival of the *Belle Hermine* in Mer Bonne, a mysterious skiff had put off from the frigate, and had come ashore on the beach in front of the Ravelin. The soldiers of the guard, who had received their orders, doubtless, made no difficulties about opening the Grand' Porte. Thomas—for it was he who in this fashion came back into the town from his ship—had brought with him a masked and silent lady, leading her in fact by the hand; which lady—if the say-so of the sailors could be trusted—was none other than a certain Spanish or Moorish girl, whom the Corsair had kidnapped, no one knew quite where, taking her to mate, and loving her so devotedly that never for a moment did he leave her, but had her ever by his side, even in the midst of battles, in the murderous

hailstorm of bullets and cannon-balls—indeed, finally going so far as to bring her back with him to St. Malo.

As for the rest—what, for example, had become of the Spanish or Moorish girl in question, and what the Corsair expected to do with her, either now or later, in a city so inhospitable to strangers, and ever priding itself as much on its prudishness as on its virginity—to these questions no one knew in the slightest what answer to make.

But one thing was certain—to wit, that, contrary to the popular belief, Thomas did not at all frequent the disreputable houses of the Grand' Rue for which he had formerly exhibited a taste; yet, this notwithstanding he none the less often abandoned his father's dwelling, situated as we know on the street of the Hazel Tree, to go walk in solitude along the ramparts, lingering most in those spots that were deserted—the Petits Murs, for instance, between the Tour Bidouanne and the Tour Notre Dame—and also l'Assiette—at the end of the street of the White Horse, half way between the above mentioned Bidouanne and Quic-en-Grogne. There he might be seen walking, with a step at once precipitate and savage. And no one had as yet ventured to disturb him there by the slightest importunity.

Yes, in very truth, the Sieur de l'Agnelet bore little enough resemblance now to the Thomas Trublet of former years.

The latter, brusque of manner, it must be admitted, but a good fellow and of likeable humour, had left many a faithful friendship in St. Malo. The former, of brutal and sombre temper, save during the few hours that, willy-nilly he had to spend daily in the house on the rue de la Coudre paid no heed to those who formerly had shown affection for him, slighting even the tenderness of parents and near relatives, causing his sister Guillemette first heavy grief, then sadness, and soon lively irritation. For between her and Thomas there had ever been a warm love,

strengthened by a mutual confidence extending to the slightest as to the weightiest things. Never had either one had a secret that the other did not share. And now, after this long absence which had cost the sister as many sighs as ever absence cost wife or mistress when husband or lover is absent, the brother, at home once more, was completely unmindful of former tenderness and even refused to renew the intimacy of earlier years!

Yes, he had refused, clearly enough, and that on the very day of his return.

No sooner had he crossed the threshold than Guillemette had thrown herself into the arms of this cherished brother, thus returning, laden with glory, to the sheepfold. And Thomas had not failed to give back kiss for kiss, hug for hug. But when—as was natural enough—she, and mother Perrine, asked to hear of his adventures, begging for the detailed recital of that six-year-long campaign, of the risks he had braved, and successes he had won, everything in short that had happened to their Thomas since he went away, his humour abruptly changed; in but an instant, his lips were, it seemed, tightly stitched together, and Guillemette had not been able to draw a word out of him.

Vainly, had she exhausted her ingenuity, asking now for the story of battles and tempests, now imploring him to describe in detail the taking of Ciudad Real, a city so rich and famous that its renown had spread even as far as St. Malo: every question served merely to make the Corsair's silence more obstinate. Above all, when curiosity prompted the girl to open the chapter of distant loves and the fair women of lands beyond the sea, Thomas, suddenly enraged, and almost savage, had risen suddenly from his chair and at a stroke had gone away, banging the door behind him, and swearing aloud at women, their senseless gossip, and their crazy persistence in believing that a man has nothing else to think about but twiddle-twaddle and child-getting!

Now, of all this, Guillemette was not yet consoled.

The last-born of the ten children with which Malo and his spouse Perrine had been blest, Guillemette, was much younger than her three sisters who had all married while she was still but a small girl; younger also than any of her brothers, of whom Thomas, the youngest of the six, was five whole years older than herself; and thus the poor girl had in her earliest years known but a gloomy childhood. Not that the old parents or her brothers and sisters treated her ill; but they were all too much older ever to take thought of helping her at her games, of playing with her, or teaching her to laugh. Only much later had Thomas—he alone—when he was fifteen or sixteen, and she ten or so—become aware of the child, who was already precociously discreet, quick to see everything that was going on around her, and wise enough to hold her own counsel and to keep a secret. And on this discovery he very quickly made of her his ally and accomplice, needing much the help she asked nothing better than to give him, in order to mask—and very adroitly—escapades such as a boy kicking over the traces is sure to fall into. And thus was friendship formed between them, a friendship that, on Guillemette's part at least, was strong, not to say tyrannous enough, to influence her to refuse every proffer of marriage. More than once had she on her knees besought old Malo not to force her to accept this match or that, however advantageous. She wanted no husband; she wanted no one to succeed Thomas in the intimacy of her affection, in the ardent trust she bestowed on him.

And now here is Thomas himself denying both the one and the other, and, to put it clearly, divorcing from the fraternal love of earlier years! Meantime, Guillemette's years had come to number twenty-two. Soon she would be an old maid. Already the boys of the town had ceased paying court to her.

And with all this a muffled anger was little by little

swelling her heart; so much that now, when Thomas left the house to take his solitary walks along the ramparts, she would often, and ever oftener, follow him with a glance that showed more than annoyance—a glance wherein burned a vengeful hate.

## CHAPTER III

S might have been foreseen, Thomas, his dinner hastily swallowed down, was furtively slipping out of the low-raftered room. Old Malo, lingering at table, was pretending not to notice the lad's hasty flight, and Perrine, grieving over it perhaps in her heart of hearts, took good care not to betray him by a word. Guillemette alone, therefore, having made her decision, also slipped noiselessly from her chair and moving quickly toward the door, quite as if by chance, stood across her brother's path.

"Are you going so soon?" she asked, speaking low. "And who is it claims you and thus calls you away from us everyday?"

He looked at her a moment before replying.

"What is that to you?" said he at last, likewise speaking low, as careful as she not to disturb father or mother.

Guillemette impatiently shook her head.

"In former times," she rejoined, "you would have told me without my asking!"

He gave a shrug:

"When times change, people do the same!" he replied drily.

She gave a stamp of her foot. But he remained calm, with an effort to check his rising anger.

"You must remember," he continued, more gently, "that for six years I have done as I chose, without ever being accountable to anyone. And I have been in places that

were the Devil's own. Many a time I haven't known where to turn, and for every plum I've plucked, I've had to make many a leap. And all, without having a soul to take counsel with. By now I've lost the habit of talking and chattering about what I do. And I've caught the habit of going my way alone, and walking straight ahead —when I walk. I can't change in any respect—not now. But don't grieve over it. Neither you nor I can help it."

And having said this, he made a move to open the door. But still Guillemette held him back:

"Listen!" said she. "Talking and chattering—that's something I don't know anything about now either. After you went away, I, like you, lost that habit. But, without so many words, couldn't we, as formerly, confide our secrets to one another and help one another with good counsel? . . . Don't make fun of me! You're not such a great sage that you haven't yet plenty to learn, nor are you so skilful in all ways that you don't risk some day being caught without a ladder to get down by!"

He stood measuring her with a glance from head to foot, laughing contemptuously.

"Oh!" said he. "Yes, I know! If you only had a pair of horns, you'd buck me good and hard! . . . But, let me tell you, I've already had blows enough to give me a tough hide. You'd only break your head, I warn you!"

"As you say!" she returned frowning, her lips in a thin, hard line.

In spite of her he had opened the door—he was going away. . . . Without a word she watched him go. But, in the corners of her mouth there was an evil smile.

At the end of the street of the Hazel Tree, Thomas turned to the left, passed down the street of the Elm, then, at the end of the rue de la Herse, took the turn to the right into the street des Petites-Chaux. Had any been following him they would at that point have guessed that he was going to his accustomed walk along the ram-

parts. Indeed, by taking the rue des Revendeuses, and passing beyond the Tour Notre Dame, he soon reached them. And there, in truth, he began to walk as his wont was, with long, hurried, and nervous steps.

The ramparts of St. Malo are, as everyone knows, a magnificent piece of masonry, and the path around them under the shelter of the parapet equals the finest promenade in the world. From that height, the view takes in, quite marvellously, every single beach at the foot of the walls, and beyond the beaches, the sea, stretching under the sky like a prodigious mirror, now blue, now green, now grey. On the day when Thomas, having climbed the stairs of the Notre Dame tower however, had advanced, as we have seen, through the Bidouanne, and l'Assiette, there were thick clouds, of most diverse forms and tints, covering the sky, their reflection on the water clothing it with a shimmering, undulating sheen, of a color ranging from mouse-grey to the grey of molten steel. Notwithstanding the beauty of the spectacle, however, Thomas gave it not a single glance. Head down, with anxious brow, he walked on as though importunate thoughts were stirring within. And thus he passed the Tour Bidouanne without heed to the sentinel, who, pike in fist, was keeping watch over the postern of the powder magazine.

But, fifty paces farther on, and a good while before reaching l'Assiette, Thomas, of a sudden, stopped.

He had just come parallel with a sort of narrow blind alley that the people of St. Malo call the street of the Dancing Cat. This alley, more deserted still than it is narrow, comes to an end in the rampart, in such fashion that the last house, built awry, opens both on the street, through a large door, and on the military boulevard, by means of a small postern. Thomas, standing quite motionless now, back to the sea, was fixedly gazing at the windows of this house.

Doubtless, he discovered what he was seeking, for sud-

denly, with a rapid glance around—sufficient to assure him that no importunate passer-by was spying upon him —he climbed down by means of a covered stair from the path of the watch, crossed the boulevard, and knocked on the smaller door of the house by the wall.

## CHAPTER IV

NEAR a window, and gazing at the sea, Juana sat motionless and silent. Her dwelling rose some six feet higher than the rampart. Leaning on the sill of the open window, she was looking out over the sentinel path, and over the crenellated parapet, at the undulating clouds, and the water over which their shadows passed. And when Thomas came in she did not even turn her head towards him, although she had heard him distinctly enough.

Nevertheless, he drew near, and, with a sweep of the hat, saluting her gentleman-fashion, he took the hand she had failed to hold out to him, and kissed it. For Juana had trained her lover to the use of these courtesies, though in acquitting himself of them he still betrayed some awkwardness.

"*Ma mie,*" said he then, tenderly enough, "*ma mie,* and how are you this day?"

Indolently, she moved her head from side to side, but with never a word.

"Aren't you comfortable here?" asked Thomas, again kissing the hand that he had not released.

Without being magnificent precisely, the dwelling possessed many such comforts as may be had in cities, such as good beds, deep armchairs, wide cupboards full of fine linen. And there were to be seen in it besides diverse rare objects of great price, bearing witness to a wealth that by much surpassed the common measure of riches—

notably, silken tapestries and numerous pieces of carven silver. But the assemblage of these heterogeneous and mismated pieces indicated that they had been brought together by chance rather than choice. There one might have found a humble wicker chair jostling a canopy that had come straight from the Gobelins, who weave for the usage of the King, or dishes of richly wrought silver plate fraternizing with jugs of humble clay.

But the fair Juana, truth to tell, seemed to pay little heed to the discrepancies of her semi-luxurious surroundings. Resembling in this those Spanish ladies, her compatriots, who spare no pains in their dress, and right willingly neglect their houses and table, she would walk about, always idle, in the rooms ever in disorder, with no thought beyond being superbly dressed and properly painted and powdered in the latest style. Thomas at times wondered at habits so different from anything he had ever seen at St. Malo, and especially he could never grow accustomed to seeing his mistress with arms ever dangling at her side and ever gaping out of the window, for never were either his mother or sister without some work in hand.

Bethinking himself of this, he continued:

"I fear that you are bored, with naught to do during the long hours when I must leave you here in solitude."

The head, so carefully dressed, once more swung from side to side. In the most nonchalant tone in the world Juana replied:

"I am not bored. But, tell me, is there never any sunshine in your country?"

"Why, of course!" Thomas affirmed. "May will soon be here, and that is ever the sunniest of months. Patience, *ma mie! Prenez patience!*"

Since the time when love had put an end to their quarreling, and had wrought close bonds between them, they had ceased addressing one another with the unceremonious "*tu*" as if its use best befitted quarrelling. And, of

a truth, there is less true intimacy between lovers, even the most impassioned, than between two mortal enemies.

Juana, however, was replying, and for the first time, with some vivacity.

"Patience! Of that I have no lack. Isn't it three weeks now since you brought me to this prison, that I never leave, whether by night or day, all to please you? And yet you promised me that this would end, and soon! Are you, at least, giving it a thought, and doing what you can to hasten the moment when I can go and come, in all freedom?"

At which Thomas, profoundly embarrassed, and not daring to reply too definitely, expended some effort in vague protestations and tender speeches. Then the damsel growing insistent, he cut her short, passing from words to gestures. And the gestures he used were eloquent enough to cause the amourous Juana to forget for so much as a quarter of an hour not only the retirement forcibly imposed upon her, but even her attire and coiffure, which both succumbed to the impetuous ardour of the Corsair, ably seconded as it was by the ardent transports of his mistress.

*Pardieu*, yes! Thomas had promised, had, in fact, sworn, that this new captivity he felt constrained to impose on his captive of yore would not last long. "Just long enough," so he assured her, "to prepare the Malouins and Malouines to give a pleasant welcome to a stranger—and a woman, at that!—who, without such precautions, would run the risk of being given a quite different reception."

That risk, Thomas, warned by Louis Guénolé, had foreseen from afar. But it was only after returning to St. Malo, and after renewing acquaintance with the people and the life of his native city, that he had begun to perceive in their true proportions the insurmountable difficulties of the case. On what terms indeed, and under what name, could he produce, before these stern burghers

of a city whose chief boast was its stainless virtue, a woman from strange lands, whom everyone—it could not fail so to transpire—would make haste to call "concubine" or indeed "strumpet" or "bawd." To speak frankly, Juana was nothing more than a prisoner of war. Soldiers and sailors use similar creatures at their good pleasure, the practice is recognized as licit. But these same soldiers and sailors take good care not to bring such women back with them to their cities and to their very homes. And Thomas did not disguise from himself that it would be pure folly to attempt to impose his mistress, *as* his mistress, on any part of the society of the province, though there was no single group of it, however haughty, and exclusive, that would not have welcomed him with every mark of respect. As to introducing a Spanish girl into his family home, of that he could not even dream. What then was he to do?

Perplexed, Thomas could come to no decision. And it was not without considerable bitterness that he perceived the lack of real power a man may have even when he has acquired such goods as are most desired of men—fortune, fame, rank, and even the favour, so highly testified to, of the Sovereign. He possessed all that, he Thomas, Sieur de l'Agnelet, whom the King himself, the incomparable Louis XIV, had desired to see with his own eyes, and to compliment in person, in his royal château of St. Germain. And with so many honours, what benefits did he derive? Not even that of being able openly to take, publicly to avow, and keep what mistress he would, without heed for "what people would say?"

"Kisses, that's no answer, Thomas, little one! Come, leave my bosom in peace, and tell me: truly now, no lies, but are you going to take me away from here soon?"

Thus Juana, renewing the attack, as she carefully rearranged her hair in front of the handsome Venetian mirror.

Thomas coughed.

"*Heu!*" said he, hesitantly, "To speak truth, how can I tell? We must first take time to find other lodgings, better than this garret. I shall find for you, *ma mie*, fine apartments, quite new and well-constructed; and then they must be suitably furnished. And then we'll have to consider the matter of servants; and after that the carriages, and the coachmen, and postillions. Everything in due season. There's no hurry. Quic-en-Grogne wasn't built in a day."

Thus he discoursed, and doing so, secretly applauded himself for finding such good excuses, so gallantly devised. What can better appease a woman than the promise of all such things as women most prize—horses, carriages, gold liveries, and a handsome house to live in? And there was no lack of gold to keep such promises.

But Juana gave a shrug. The Venetian mirror still reflected a calm face, and the comb and powder-puff still zealously passed to and fro over the high-piled coiffure that was like delicately sculptured ebony.

"*Peuh!*" said she finally, with high disdain, "select everything as you please, I'll find no fault. But other matters are more pressing. Have you no priests or churches hereabout? I have great need of religion, for my soul is surely blacker than coal by now. How many Sundays must it be since I have been to mass? Beside, I have a great fancy to kneel at divine service beside you, *mon coeur*."

Thomas, to whom such fancies had not occurred, could scarcely repress a start.

Although pious enough himself, the idea that his mistress might ever need to go to confession had never once entered his head. He loved her, and passionately, but this notwithstanding—or, who knows? perhaps for this very reason!—saw her as none other than a veritable heretic, given to strange idolatries, such as her devotion to a certain Brunette so many times invoked and so many times cursed . . . a heretic, yes—or *worse*—a half-

demon, too strangely voluptuous, too impassioned in all the games of love for a Christian not to run some risk to his soul in bringing his body close to such heat as that! Louis Guénolé, good lad if ever there was one, hadn't he time and time again crossed himself on meeting in his path her whom he openly called a "sorceress"? And now, all of a sudden, this sorceress or semi-demon, whichever it might be, was asking for priests and masses, confessions, and communions, neither more nor less eager to approach the Communion Table than a bigot on a holiday!

"Well then?" asked Juana. "Have you no answer to give me?"

What answer, indeed? Extraordinary as the present occasion was, it was even more perilous. Where could he take her, stranger as she was, her presence unknown to any, to what priest, to what church? Not to the cathedral surely, which brings together all the gossips in the community, their tongues well-sharpened in advance! Not to the little chapels of the diverse convents, frequented only by a limited number of the faithful, to whom it is accorded as a special privilege to worship there. Where, then? To the mass at the château, which is open to all, but where one rarely meets anyone but the soldiers of the garrisons—since they had been forbidden to show themselves at the other masses celebrated in the town, the jealous burghers having besought this restriction from the authorities, lest the dazzling uniforms of the King's soldiers too much distract their wives from their pious duties?

"Well?" repeated Juana, impatiently. "What are you thinking about there, with your mouth open?"

He had not yet found an answer. Suddenly, she turned on him with scorching anger.

"What does this mean then?" she cried. "Are you ashamed of me? Am I too plain, or not sufficiently high-born to appear beside peasants such as you before your

Virgin of the Grand' Route, or Grand' Porte, your Virgin of pirates and cutpurses? Dog that you are! But I give you fair warning! Next Sunday you are to lead me by the hand into your most holy church, or—I swear it by the soul of my dead father slain by you—and traitorously! you will repent of it!"

## CHAPTER V

OW on that same day, which was a Friday, the gate of the graveyard above the town stood open, as prescribed by an order from the Seigneur Bishop, who desired that once a week, and particularly on Fridays, the day sanctified by the Passion of the Son of God, the town's folk of St. Malo should have the opportunity to offer their devotions on the tombs of their dead. Thus, it came about that through this open gate a woman passed, holding a child by the hand. She was simply dressed in a skirt of rough woolen, and wore a widow's cap. The child, a slender waif, was tall-grown, lively, and already roguish; but now he was neither laughing nor frolicking, but staid quietly by his mother's side. Without loitering both mother and lad made their way past the graves, some of them moss-grown, some quite new. Walking like people who know where they are going, they finally paused and knelt before a humble, almost a shame-faced, wooden cross. It bore the name of "Vincent Kerdoncuff."

For the woman was Anne-Marie Kerdoncuff, the sister of the man in the grave; and the child was the bastard son of Thomas Trublet, born of the unmarried mother Anne-Marie.

It was five months after the death of the unlucky Vincent, five months also after the departure of Thomas, captain of the *Belle Hermine*, that the disconsolate Anne-Marie Kerdoncuff destined henceforth to lead a

lonely life for a long, long time—forever perhaps—had been brought to bed of this bastard child, in the year of grace 1673, on the second Friday in Lent.

Every girl who stumbles and falls from the straight road followed by wiser maidens ever pays dearly for her weakness or her folly. But Anne-Marie in like case paid four times over, and thought to die many a time from the affronts, cruelty, and brutality even which struck her hard as hail from every side. How she escaped, nevertheless, with her life, and how it was that she did not, after surviving the pains of childbirth, die of hunger or exposure, but nursed her baby, and brought him up, and educated him—better perhaps than the legitimate offspring of many a burgher's wife, or lady duly married, who glories in so being (the while she cuckolds her husband)—how she did this, I say—God knows, and He alone!

Justly enough, everyone had at first cast her off, insulted her, pointed the finger of scorn at the poor girl. Her father and mother, respectable folk, made haste to put her out on the street so soon as her disgrace became common knowledge. She lodged then where she could, and was delivered—just like any homeless cat or dog—in the gutter, the hospital certainly not having been built for the convenience of harlots. Even in this extremity passers-by turned a cold shoulder. Alone of all who lived in the town, two sisters of the convent of Notre Dame de Victoire took this occasion to practise the virtue of charity, and deigned to assist in her frightful child-bearing this, as one might say, plague-spotted creature. As for the child, a priest baptised it,—as a signal favour—but, needless to say, there were no bells ringing, nor comfits. After which no other human being gave a thought further either to mother or child.

Nevertheless, the mother made shift to live, and the child also. For this Anne-Marie Kerdoncuff was not of a sort utterly to be despised. She lacked neither energy

nor courage, and who knows? with the slightest assistance of fortune, she might have been the most respectable of respectable women, had God placed her in the home of a husband who might with good reason have been proud of such a wife. Destiny had otherwise decreed. But although reduced to that last of all things—a woman brought to bed of child without a husband—Thomas Trublet's former sweetheart bravely earned her daily bread, even with the whole town exercising its ingenuity to render that hard-won daily pittance of hers as bitter as gall.

Five years of bitter solitude. For Anne-Marie Kerdoncuff there were now neither parents, relatives, nor friends. Her own family had cast her off, had even forbidden her to bear their name, for fear it might be soiled, and by an order of the gentlemen of the Corps de Ville who devised a regulation on purpose to fit the case, forced her henceforth to call herself Anne-Marie, and nothing more. Anne-Marie then was no longer a member of any family whatsoever, and so, very naturally, everyone drew away from her. It was not the business of mere outsiders to take sides, or to protect a lost woman from the just wrath of a respectable man, such as her father.

Nor was anyone astonished that he should display such harshness. Unlike the Trublet family, simple fisherfolk whom fishing cruises had little by little enriched, the Kerdoncuffs were of old burgher stock whose once prosperous fortunes had little by little declined. Now, as it is wont to be among the human kind, pride and vanity in this household on the verge of ruin increased in proportion as its influence and fortune diminished. The shameful conduct of the pitiable Anne-Marie had been like a red-hot iron to the already raw and bleeding pride of all that St. Malo still contained of Kerdoncuffs.

Worst of all, these same Kerdoncuffs had formerly treated with great disdain son Thomas Trublet, sprung

of mere fishermen, when he had taken it into his head to pay their still virtuous Anne-Marie the small amount of courting we have already heard about. For this courting had not altogether escaped the notice of the sharp-eyed gossips and scandal-mongers. The Kerdoncuffs then had been uppish enough to wound the lad's feelings; and it was this contempt displayed by the parents of his Anne-Marie which had no doubt strengthened Thomas's resolution to cut the adventure short. Guillemette Trublet, first the friend, then the enemy and rival of Anne-Marie, had maliciously rejoiced in this breaking of relations. She had herself by every means in her power tried to bring such a rupture about. And the Kerdoncuffs too had rejoiced over it, though they had promptly been vexed enough to hear the same scandal-mongers now change their tune, and spread the tale all over town that it was the Trublet boy who had jilted the Kerdoncuff girl. But to all such slanderous talk they turned a deaf ear, telling everyone who would listen that never could such a maid as their Anne-Marie, with such blood in her veins, and of such proud nature as she was, have listened even a moment to a boy of no family, just poor trash, who had had the temerity to raise his eyes to one so far above him! Whereupon they were caught, so to speak, in their own springe; for Anne-Marie being with child, they dared not in so flagrant a fashion eat their words, and disdained to accuse Thomas, disdaining also all attempts to claim reparation. Their daughter, once fallen, was no longer their daughter. As to Thomas, the vengeance of the Kerdoncuffs could at once reach him in another guise—Vincent was dead, and was not Thomas the murderer?

Thus judged the Kerdoncuffs. By great good luck, Messieurs of the Corps de Ville judged differently.

And, as ever befalls in all matters, even the most entangled, this one too was solved at last. Thomas, winning glory and riches beyond the seas, was finally reputed

to be such a valiant man that every calumny touching him withered away. Vincent, turned again to dust, was forgotten. And only the oldest of the adder-tongued old hags of the town now remained to shrill their insults at Anne-Marie as she passed—plain Anne-Marie, it was now —who rarely left her hovel anyway, save to take the child out to walk—for she loved the boy all the more dearly that he had cost her so many tears; and a fine seedling of a man he was growing to be, brave and wise for his years.

So firmly was all this tissue of event and circumstance interwoven that even the return of the Sieur de l'Agnelet brought no change.

Thus, before Vincent Kerdoncuff's grave, Anne-Marie was praying contritely and with fervour. No one else in all St. Malo—Thomas excepted—knew that her brother lying there in his grave in front of her had died on her account. For those many years before, on the day of that mortal encounter, Vincent, as he went out to seek Thomas, had told his sister what he was about to do, even boasting with some pride that he would promptly repair the fault by her committed, and promising to bring back to his erring sister the husband she had too soon espoused. *Las!* Things could not have turned out worse.

Thus Anne-Marie was praying at that very hour, as she was wont to pray every week, supplicating Our Lord and His Most Holy Mother to pardon the vanquished duellist even though he had died in a state of mortal sin. And the child too was praying, in his childish way, with many a sign of the cross, made now with his left hand, and now with his right. But the moment came when he knew no more to say, having recited all his prayers from beginning to end, and he grew silent. His mother, noticing that he had paused, made him kneel close beside her, and holding his hands close-joined in hers, whispered to him word by word a prayer doubtless improvised that very moment; and docilely he repeated:

"Good Child Jesus, take pity on me, born like you without a father. Holy Virgin Mary, intercede for me, and tell the Good God to give me a foster-father as he did long ago to your little son. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Amen!"

## CHAPTER VI

ND thus," said Louis Guénolé, somewhat embarrassed, to judge by his bearing, "my brother Thomas you say, is not at home?"

"*Non, pardieu!*" replied Malo Trublet extending a warmly welcoming hand to the visitor. "Your brother Thomas is not here. But he'll be back of a surety for supper. And if you don't wait for him, your sister Guillemette there will wish a bad fate upon you, for she's dying to have a gossip with you. Stay, lad, put down your hat yonder, for you'll wear out its rim with turning it that way in your fingers. Stay, I'm telling you! And you'll sup with us, and that will be giving everyone of us a pleasure, old bones and young. The kettle's on the boil with a fine young rooster in it. *Pardieu*, my boy, you must stay, or I'll be angry! Come now, yes or no, aren't you a member of this family?"

Thus cordially urged, Louis Guénolé stayed.

Visitors were none too frequent in the house on the rue de la Coudre. Though now rich, even beyond their desires, Malo and Perrine, very wisely, had not been willing to change their accustomed mode of life, agreeing that they were now too old for new things, however good in themselves the new things might be, or appear to be. Thomas could later do as he liked, and could play at being a bourgeois or even a seigneur, if he so pleased. As for his father and mother, born fisherfolk, fisherfolk they had lived, and fisherfolk they would die. Of the riches

that had come to them so late, they would none the less have enjoyed the chief benefits—to wit, greater comforts and tranquility, such as better food to eat, better wine to drink, better beds wherein to sleep. But nothing else, and especially, nothing for the pleasure of strangers rather than for that of the masters of the house. Neither Malo nor Perrine cared to see in their old home, now that they had a good provision of fat gold coins, that bedizened crew known as the *beau monde*, whose members would naturally never had thought of coming to the rue de la Coudre when Malo and Perrine were poor folk.

It was only real friends who haunted the Trublet home, the friends of earlier times. But to these the door was ever wide open. And Louis Guénolé, accounted by every one as Thomas's own brother, and as being as much a Trublet at heart as though actually so by birth and blood, ever aroused a heartfelt joy in his hosts on those occasions when it suited him to knock at the Trublet door.

They had leisure now to talk, Guillemette and Louis, alone, or almost alone, the old man having, as was his custom, fallen asleep in his chair while waiting for the traditional hour at which the steaming soup would be set upon the table.

"And so," Guillemette was repeating, after many a question leading to that subject around which she hovered as a cat does round a cream jug, "and so you don't know where it is Thomas goes in the long hours when he is away from here? He is ever going out of that door, alone and gloomy, and endless are the hours when we don't know where he is. You don't know?"

"I don't know," repeated Louis, obstinately.

It was true that he had his suspicions. But even the most rigourous truthfulness did not oblige him to speak of that concerning which he was not absolutely certain. And besides, he felt a certain distaste for betraying Thomas's secrets, even to good purpose.

Guillemette, suspicious, persisted in her questioning.

"But to you, to his Coast Brother, does he confide nothing?"

"Nothing!" said Louis. And a note of bitterness which did not escape Guillemette crept into his voice, convincing her that this was no lie he told. She, too, understood the sadness and pain of being denied the affection of one we love, of being denied the secrets and the confidence we feel a right to share.

"In that case," said she, "and since you are to talk with him soon, question him as you should, and find out the truth of the matter. For, on my faith, I am greatly uneasy, and I would lay my head on the block to it, but there are many evil things at the bottom of this mystery!"

At which Louis gave a shrug, for he was himself no less convinced of that which Guillemette so heatedly declared, and not alas! without the best of reasons: was anything more needed to justify the most baleful forebodings than the fact that Juana was in St. Malo?

He was, moreover, this lad Guénolé, more clear-sighted than his brother Thomas—and no credit to him for that: is it not the custom of the wicked little Archer god to blind, without exception, everyone of his servitors? Guénolé had not waited until he arrived in Mer Bonne to be terrified by the innumerable obstacles standing in the way of Thomas's bold intention of introducing into the very bosom of the prudish virgin city of St. Malo a damsel picked up, God knows where, perhaps a sorceress indeed, or a heretic, and most assuredly a daughter of joy. Why the thing was a hundred times worse than impossible! It was inconceivable! But Thomas had not then asked for advice any more than later he had asked for assistance. Alone, and concealing the event from everyone, even Guénolé, he had brought Juana ashore off the Ravelin, and led her by night through the Grand' Porte. And, although secretly hurt by the apparent dis-

trust thus displayed by his so deeply loved brother, Louis was none the less pleased at being in this wise relieved of any part in the adventure; when Thomas came to repent of his act, he would have no one but himself to blame for the embarrassments, annoyances, and disappointments which could not fail sooner or later to descend upon him like driving hail.

Guillemette, however, was continuing:

"Formerly," said she, "he would never have concealed from me the slightest of his troubles, or even the worst. And he himself may well have told you that he never had cause to regret his confidence, and never was there gossip or mishap touching his affairs through me. You who now know all that concerns him can bear me witness. Of all the wild pranks he played, in which our city counsellors and even Monseigneur in person took a hand, diligently seeking the culprit, was there ever anything found out? Has anything ever been revealed even in the case of Anne-Marie Kerdoncuff concerning which even Thomas was so anxious that he would not come back from America with you last year, and chose rather to send you to learn what had become of the mother, the child, and the man who had been slain?"

Thus she continued a long time. But Louis Guénolé, suddenly attentive, raised his head.

"What's that?" he asked, when Guillemette had done. "What's that about a mother and a child in the case of Vincent Kerdoncuff?"

For he did not at all know that Thomas was the father of the child born to Anne-Marie. Long years ago, at La Tortue, Thomas had told him of the old quarrel—had told him all but its true cause. And to Louis, who never in talking to whomever it might be would have concealed any slightest part of the truth, it had never occurred that Thomas might sometimes be less scrupulous.

Open-mouthed, Guillemette was staring at him.

"What!" said she, mistrustful out of sheer astonishment. "What is that you are asking? And why do you pretend ignorance? Do you perhaps think that I don't know the whole story and even that I didn't know it before you did?"

But Louis Guénolé, more astonished still than she, held out both hands open wide.

"I don't understand!" said he.

She passed a hand across her forehead.

"How is that possible? Your word on it, you don't know? . . ."

"What is this thing that I don't know?" Guénolé asked.

"The thing you are asking about! Come, this mother, and this child. But you are making fun of me! For Thomas sent you home ahead of him, last summer, as a precaution."

"He sent me," Guénolé explained, "to see if the Kerdoncuffs were still seeking vengeance touching the duel of six years ago. My coming had nothing to do with any mother or any child."

"But this duel," Guillemette exclaimed—"this duel—it was Vincent who brought it about because of his sister Anne-Marie—who was in trouble."

Guénolé, dumbfounded, took four steps back.

"In trouble?" he repeated. "In trouble . . . through Thomas?"

"*Pardine!*" said Guillemette. "And through whom else then?"

They were both silent for a whole minute. Then Guillemette sought an explanation.

"*Ça!*" she began, "How then did things happen? What befell Anne-Marie, how she was driven out of the house by her parents—you surely were not unacquainted with all that?"

"Of course not," Louis replied, "but what I didn't know was that the child's father was Thomas."

"Ah, well then!" said Guillemette, "if Thomas didn't

tell you, you could scarcely learn it from anyone else, for the secret was well kept! You are the very first person I have mentioned it to, and if I have opened my mouth to you about it, it is because I thought you must know."

"But the girl?" interrupted Guénolé, suddenly. "What of her, Anne-Marie? Does she too guard this secret? And why, *Sainte Vierge?*"

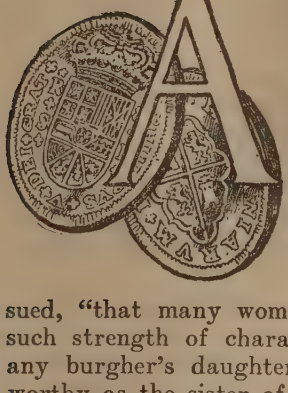
"How do I know?" replied Guillemette with indifference. "Out of foolishness, doubtless, or fear, most like, lest she suffer new annoyances through her gossip . . . or, who knows? . . . because she loves him perhaps, for Thomas told me once that love him she did, and dearly. In any case, loose-lived trollope that she is, Thomas never doubted that the child was of his making. But why worry so much about that kind of breed?"

Louis Guénolé walked away and picked up his hat that hung from a corner of the kneading trough.

"Louis," said Guillemette, "what are you doing now?"

"I am going to meet Thomas," said he, "the sooner to be with him."

## CHAPTER VII



ND this girl," Louis Guénolé declared in his gravest tone—"this girl has endured, during six long years, all the suffering that you wot of; yet, notwithstanding, she has not betrayed your secret, and she has fed and provided for your son. Do I speak truth?"

"Yes!" Thomas confessed, looking down at the ground.

"Do you believe," Guénolé pursued, "that many women would have been capable of such strength of character? And do you think that any burgher's daughter in all St. Malo could be as worthy as the sister of the dead Vincent Kerdoncuff to enter our cathedral on your arm and there to the ringing of the great chimes in the steeple, and the celebration of high mass at the altar, become the wedded wife of Thomas Trublet, Sieur de l'Agnelet?"

"You speak truth," confessed Thomas promptly, without a moment's hesitation.

"Then," said Guénolé, "why do you not go at once and ask her to give you her hand in marriage?"

"Because I don't love her," said Thomas.

He had raised his head and was looking at Louis Guénolé; and the latter, surprised, and failing to understand, stood silent, reflecting on all that had passed.

For he was not a lad at all resembling other lads, this Louis Guénolé. The son of honest folk sufficiently well-off—his father, a smith on the rue de la Herse, had never lacked for work, well-skilled as he was in fine iron-

smithing—the boy had, since childhood, paid more attention to his father's anvils and hammers than to marbles, tops, and the wooden shoes of scalawags of his own age. Later on, when he was fourteen or fifteen, and the girls began to notice his bonny person, his skin white as a fresh sheet of paper, and his hair black as undried ink, he gave no heed to their gallant overtures. Pious with an ardent piety, profoundly fearful of the Devil and of Hell, and firmly convinced that even one innocent woman can lead astray more Christians than twenty guileful demons, the lad was greatly mistrustful of the maidens. And, the while his comrade Thomas, of warmer blood and piety less warm, was already in pursuit of many a petticoat—Anne-Marie's included—Louis, who was beginning to discover in himself a passion for all things connected with the sea, spent on board the ships at anchor in the roadstead every hour not devoted to prayers, confession, and other pious exercises. Thus had they in such different fashions spent the coinage of youth; to such different purposes, indeed, that when, in the twenty-second year of both lads, the Chevalier Danycan had enrolled one and the other on the *Belle Hermine*, Thomas was already as debauched as a German mercenary, and Louis was still in very sooth a virgin.

Such had they been when they embarked—in the year of grace 1672—and such did they disembark—in the year of grace 1678. Louis, as guileless as before in the art of love, was still in utter ignorance of what love might mean. So much so that, having asked Thomas, "Why don't you marry Anne-Marie?" and Thomas having replied, "Because I don't love her," he could scarcely have understood the reply any less if, instead of making it in good French, Thomas had pronounced it in bad Iroquois.

Just the same, after making a valiant, though vain, effort to penetrate the profound meaning of the mysterious words: "I don't love her," Louis Guénolé returned to the charge:

"What matter?" said he simply. "Don't we, every day of our lives, do something that we don't want to do, and that we therefore don't like to do? Nevertheless, it's your duty as an honourable man to marry this girl."

"That may be," Thomas agreed. "But if I don't love her, what then can I do?"

Louis remembered, very much to the purpose, a sentence that he had often heard, and which he accordingly produced:

"Marry her first, and you'll love her afterwards."

"Ho!" said Thomas, raising both arms to heaven; "what are you saying there, brother Louis? Bethink you that Anne-Marie and I were lovers once. There was love then between us. But it has gone, and can therefore never come back. Besides, I love another woman, so much so, indeed, that if the mother of my bastard suspected to what degree, she would herself refuse to marry me, preferring to die rather."

"Ho!" said Louis in his turn.

That Juana was at the bottom of all this did not cause him any high degree of surprise. To steal a husband from his spouse, or a father from his son, that was certainly witchcraft, as much so as many another instance of black art. As to her being a witch, of that little doubt. Juana was a witch. And by her Thomas had been bewitched, or if not bewitched exactly, something approaching it. Louis promptly mumbled a Latin prayer between his teeth. After which, having regained his courage, and his indignation too:

"Oh, brother Thomas!" he cried, "and is it this Moorish heretic, already damned of a surety, who is keeping you from heeding the voice of honour, and who is thus putting your soul in the gravest peril?"

But Thomas, again, was looking down at the ground; and he replied not a word.

They were walking side by side along the deserted

streets, heedful only of not drawing too near the Trublet dwelling, for they could not have failed to enter, since the supper hour had struck, and a good while back to boot; and both preferred to drain the talk to the dregs, that they might never need touch it again.

Louis, meanwhile, came back to the "Moorish heretic."

"Brother Thomas," cried he, "for God's love, answer me! Tell me, have I not ever been your mate and your man, and have you not sought ever, even against my own will, to ask me counsel each time we have had a hard battle on our hands, or a rough bit of business to carry through? Tell me, 'no!' if I lie! But if it's 'yes,' you have to answer; then I adjure you and conjure you! . . . Sainte Anne d'Auray! . . . do you know what it means for a girl well-born and worthy in every respect to be driven out, with blows and harsh words, from the house she was born in, to be then insulted by every burgher in the town, to be pointed to with scorn in the streets, to be stoned by any little ragamuffin who is playing hooky? Brother Thomas, does it occur to you that many a time your little son must have been awakened, as his mother sat rocking him, by the uproar of pots and tin pans pounded one against the other in that devil's serenade our people play before the windows of fallen women? What, brother, can you do to make up for all this harm? And your boy, who is flesh of your flesh, can it be that you want him to remain a bastard, not knowing even that he is your son—the son of Thomas l'Agnelet?"

"There are worse things than that," said Thomas as though thinking aloud.

He was barely listening; for he remembered the oath sworn long years before to Vincent Kerdoncuff as the latter lay giving up his last breath . . . "By the Christ of the Ravelin, and by the Virgin of the Grand' Porte," he, Thomas Trublet had sworn to marry Anne-Marie, if it proved that Anne-Marie was with child through him. And so it had proved indeed; and through him—even he

did not for a moment doubt it. If he did not marry her, what would Vincent Kerdoncuff say from the depths of his grave? And what would the redoubtable Virgin say, and what the Christ, so terrible to perjurers?

"Yes, there are things far worse!" repeated Thomas, shivering in his very marrow.

"*Ma Doué!*" said Louis Guénolé, open-mouthed. "And what then could be worse?"

But Thomas judged it unnecessary to reply. He was pondering within himself. Was there no remedy? Was not money a sovereign balm, a cure for every ill? After all, the case of Anne-Marie was not so grave as that of Juana. And even Juana's might be happily resolved—by dint of spending many a piece of eight at the right moment. Perhaps no more was needed to make of Vincent's sister a respectable bourgeoise, and of the bastard a boy as good as any other in the town. There remained in truth the Christ and his Very Holy Mother. Could they be appeased, they, the All-Powerful Ones, by means of candles, masses, alms, penitence, and other appropriate devotions—offered in profusion?

"*Las!*" Guénolé was saying, greatly saddened, "brother Thomas, I see you anxious and downcast, but not yet resolving to do what is right. Can it really be that such a woman . . . ? Ah, Thomas, the Evil One was of a surety following in our wake the day when we gave chase to that accursed galleon, on board which was this Juana. Why must this be, Brother Thomas, why?"

"Because I love her," said Thomas.

## CHAPTER VIII

HEN, on the following Sunday, Whitsunday it was, the canon of the cathedral, honoured as vicar in perpetuity of St. Malo, climbed into the pulpit after the reading of the evangels at high mass, and prepared to deliver his sermon, as the custom is, he must assuredly have praised God for the goodly number of the faithful there assembled, turning such attentive and devout faces toward their vicar. Of a surety, Malouins, and Malouines, good Christians all, and ever mindful of their churchly duties, always take good care not to miss high mass of a Sunday. But the divine service, duly intoned with all pomp and ceremony, to the accompaniment of the organ, and with a sermon added thereto, often lasts a full two hours by the clock. And for many a good wife those two hours are a very long time indeed, with their thoughts ever turning to the dinner that must be cooked, on Sundays, as well as other days; and thus they are prone to choose rather the low mass, that the servants attend, at six o'clock, or the preaching at seven. On high feast-days, however, one is ever more ready to sacrifice the ceremonies of food to those of religion. And the good vicar, rejoicing in having before his eyes further proof of this observation, began his preaching to an assemblage which represented nearly the whole town.

Needless to say, Thomas was there, accompanying father Malo and mother Perrine, with his sister Guillemette beside him; and likewise his brothers Bertrand and Barthelemy, both newly disembarked from a voyage to

the Angola coast. Erect and proud they held themselves, as befits honourable folk who are rich and well thought of in their community, and about whom no scandal-mongering tongue dares wag. And many a burgher of importance in the town had pressed close to his neighbours to make room in the midst of his own group for these Trublets, henceforth real burghers too, and indeed of the best. Thomas, glancing hither and yon, recognized his godfather, Guillaume Hamon, Sieur de la Tremblaye, and Jan Gaultier also, and his brother Yves, and Pierre le Picard—all rich armourers—and not far away was the Chevalier Danycan, whose enterprises, all most fortunate, had incontestably made him the very king of corsairing and of commerce—and hiding behind him could be spied Julien Gravé from whom meanness and cowardice had little by little taken away all that by which Danycan had grown. . . . In short, all St. Malo was there; and the *vicaire perpetuel* could in good truth be very proud of so numerous and fine a congregation.

Holy and good man that he was, however, it was to God alone he attributed all merit and praise. And, after duly making the sign of the cross, preparatory to a private prayer to his Creator, he began his sermon in loud tones—proclaiming, by way of prelude—and he was blessed with the most powerful of voices—the divine command which he desired on that day to impress upon his flock:

"*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.* . . ."

Now, at this moment, those who by chance were looking towards Thomas Trublet, Sieur de l'Agnelet, might have seen him shaken with an abrupt shudder—doubtless, because of some wandering draught that had crept in through an ill-closed door, or mayhap through the broken pane of a window. . . .

Very far from the pulpit—far also from the honour-

able folk, the burghers of the proud city, and the virtuous women who were their wives, sisters, daughters, or mothers —a humble creature, clad in black, wearing a widow's coif, and endeavouring not to be noticed, crouched in the shadow of a pillar. Anne-Marie this woman, in the shadow, Anne-Marie, who had been a Kerdoncuff, and was now nothing; with one hand she held close to her skirts the bastard boy begotten upon her by Thomas years gone by—a child who had known no father, and for whom his mother, in her resignation, expected none.

Meanwhile, the preacher had plunged to the very quick of his homily:

" . . . And now, my beloved brethren," he was saying, "we must understand clearly what this commandment means! It is not only the betraying of oaths that the divine word here forbids and condemns; it is not only such frightful crimes as this, hated and abhorred by the very heretics themselves, crimes with which I am sure no Malouin would burden his soul. But it means also any oath or blasphemy whatever, for the slightest of these weighs more heavily on a truly Christian conscience than Forts Quic-en-Grogne and la Générale together weigh upon the sands of the Sillon! Bethink yourselves, my brethren, think of this without ceasing: the very name of God taken in vain exposes us to the most frightful torments of purgatory! To say nothing of that which is so indescribably worse, that of which I do not wish even to speak—deadly and mortal sin; for whoever shall knowingly call upon Our Lord Jesus, or His Very Holy Mother, or any other of the glorious inhabitants of Paradise, to witness a false oath—that man, doubly foresworn, since he lies twice, once to his neighbour and once to God—will, at his last breath, go straight to the fiery regions owned of Satan, there to stew in that diabolical kettle which is ever boiling over with sulphurous flames, molten lead, and a thousand other inflammable ingredi-

ents. . . . Throughout eternity, my brethren! Imagine, if you can, the inconceivable horror of this endless torment, of this unending time, compared with which a thousand centuries are no longer than a single second! My brethren, let this salutary terror be a powerful check laid upon you to keep you from sinning, let it be like a gag upon your mouths to keep within them and drive back into your throats every false or imprudent word you might be tempted to speak!"

Thus preached the *vicaire perpetuel*, with great unction and persuasive eloquence. And every ear was stretched so as to lose no word of the sermon—when an unwonted swirling and eddying suddenly agitated that part of the congregation which was near the side door, the entrance used by the lay members of the community, the main door being reserved for Monseigneur the Bishop, and the clergy, both of the episcopal manor and of the chapter. The crowd then, but a second before motionless and silent, began to stir and whisper; for contrary to the good order and discipline of the holy precincts, and although the mass had begun full three-quarters of an hour before, a woman had brazenly pushed open the leathern double swinging doors, and was making her way in, boldly advancing toward the central nave, as coolly as though the *Introibo ad altare Dei* had not yet been sung. The noise occasioned was great enough, and the stir noticeable enough to arouse in all parts of the assemblage a curiosity which turned face after face toward that part whence proceeded this unseemly disturbance. And Thomas, having like his neighbours turned around to look, began to tremble from head to foot, his face white as a winding sheet . . . for he had recognized Juana. . . .

In spite of the desire she had so clearly expressed, and the threats she had made relative to the matter, Thomas had never even once dreamt of leading his mistress "by the hand" as she would have wished, into the "holiest place of worship in all St. Malo." Erroneously trusting

in the old proverb, which says that women are weathercocks, ever pointing in a different direction, he had for a whole week long prudently avoided a return to the dangerous subject of devotions, confessions, and prayers. And Juana besides had herself not again alluded to them. So that, Saturday passed, Thomas had believed himself safely out of the difficulty; most assuredly Juana had forgotten all about her caprice of a day.

Now, as it happened, Juana had done nothing of the sort, for rarely did she forget anything whatsoever. But greatly humiliated by the hesitation her lover had betrayed, and secretly convinced that he was, indeed, ashamed of her, she had resolved to bring the matter out into the open, by going alone to that place to which he was unwilling to conduct her, there to join him publicly, at any cost!

And now there she was, in the midst of this cathedral full of Malouin notables, all of whom had caught sight of her, and all of whom continued to stare at her, astonished to see this unknown face, and censuring the noisy entrance she had made, so grievously disturbing to the service. . . . High in his pulpit the *vicaire perpetuel* had twice stopped short to cast a glance of annoyance at the intruder. And now he was abridging his sermon and jumbling his peroration, for, distracted like himself, the congregation was no longer listening with the same pious attentiveness it had before displayed toward its pastor.

Standing close beside Thomas, Guillemette too had looked—had seen—and had understood. Her ever-watchful jealousy had on the instant recognized in this strange girl—too thin, too dark, with mouth too red, and eyes too brilliant—the rival, the enemy, the thief who had stolen away Thomas's friendship and trust, and who, doubtless, forced him daily to join her, God knows where, obliging him constantly to leave, hour upon hour, the family home, which drooped in sadness at this desertion.

Pale with a cold, a concentrated rage, Guillemette was attentively and secretly watching her brother. Thomas, mouth tightly closed, and eyebrows drawn together, persistently kept his gaze fastened on the high altar. But one knew him little, indeed, if one mistook the ferocious and obstinate nature of that gaze, wherein Guillemette read more clearly than in a book in the largest type, his embarrassment, his rage, his discomfort, and mortal dread. . . .

Mass was drawing to an end, however. Facing the congregation, the officiating priest had chanted the *Ite, missa est.* Then, passing, as prescribed by solemn ritual, to the right-hand side of the altar, he intoned the final chant, *In principio erat Verbum.* . . . And Thomas, pondering within himself, could devise no way by which to avoid Juana's perceiving him, when, shortly, surrounded by his family, he would move down the aisle of the church. What would she do? What scandal would she let loose? He dared not even imagine. . . .

The priest, at the bottom of the steps, was singing now, and the whole congregation was singing with him, with the loyalty of good subjects, faithful to their prince, *Domine, fac salvum Regem.* . . .

Thomas alone was dumb, so preoccupied with his thoughts that he forgot—surely for the first time in his life—to pray to God for the salvation and glory of that King, Louis XIV, whom nevertheless he so dearly loved.

The dreaded moment had come. Once out of the sacred precincts, Thomas—caught between Bertrand, Barthelemy, and Guillemette, and forced to follow Malo and Perrine, who walked very slowly, leaning on each other's arm—Thomas then could do no otherwise than go down the rue de la Blatrerie, and advance towards the arch through which one issues from the close. Now under that very arch Juana had stopped to wait for her lover.

The spot was not ill-chosen: the population of the whole city was crowding round about it, and nowhere could a scandal break out more violently or more effectively. Already, many of the curious had stopped close to this singular damsel whom no one had ever seen, and concerning whom everybody was in complete ignorance, even as to what she was doing there, planted like a milepost on the street corner, and watching God knows what. . . .

But others besides soon shared His knowledge.

The Trublets were arriving near the arch. Promptly, Juana took four strides forward, with one hand pushed aside Barthelemy who stood in her way, seized Thomas by the arm, and said to him loud enough so that not a soul there from one end of the street to the other could by any chance miss a word:

"And will you now take me back to our home, *mon coeur?*"

The crowd, trampling the stones of the pavement, chattering and trifling together before drifting out through the narrow opening of the arch, suddenly grew dumb, and complete silence prevailed. And in the self-same second, every Malouin there understood exactly what was up, who Juana was, what were the relations binding her to Thomas, and what dishonour would thence fall on everyone bearing the name of Trublet, from Malo and Perrine to Guillemette and her brothers. And, indeed, all of them, even as many as were there, at once appeared paralysed with consternation, and like people near whom a thunderbolt has fallen. Not a man there, or woman either, uttered so much as a syllable. Emboldened by which, Juana, who had not let go of Thomas's arm, began again:

"*Ça*, aren't you coming?"

And then Thomas Trublet, who up to that moment had not breathed a word, any more than his father and mother, but had like them stood motionless and paralysed,

suddenly regained the mastery of his wits and came to himself. All was lost, irretrievably lost; the scandal was public property now and of such a nature as never to be lived down. There was nothing, therefore, to be done but to face it boldly, head up—as Filibusters and Corsairs are wont to bear themselves in moments when they have to fight, one man against a hundred!—Thomas Trublet, Sieur de l'Agnelet, straightened, and raised upon the crowd a flashing glance. Then, speaking to his mistress:

"*Hola!*" said he, and his voice rang harsh and imperious as ever it had done on the quarter-deck of the *Belle Hermine*, in the hour of battle—"*hola!* you, and who gave you permission to come here? And since when have you taken to doing as you pleased, against my orders?"

Juana, very pale, took a step back, and opened her mouth to reply. But before she could get out her words, Guillemette, who had vastly enjoyed the rebuff inflicted upon her enemy, burst into a shrill laugh. Instantly, Thomas turned upon her.

"And you," he said in his tone of command, "be silent! Or it will be the worse for your skin! If you as much as lay a finger on this one here, you'll bleed for it!"

Face to face, nails upraised, mistress and sister seemed about to fall upon one another. The crowd, athirst for scandal, and eager for this additional titbit of torn hair and rent clothing, pressed close upon them. Terrified, old Perrine held on to Guillemette with both hands. But Malo Trublet, suddenly recovering from the stupor into which he had been thrown, and, with a mighty effort regaining his dignity as father and chief of the family, drew his spouse towards him.

"Wife," said he, "come away!"

He looked at Thomas—Thomas, his best-loved son—and a painful surge shook the old father's heart. But he did not hesitate.

"Come away, wife," he repeated. "Our place is in our home, not in the street. . . .

"Come! And I command my children to follow me!"

For the rest that he had to say old Malo was forced to pause, hardening his heart:

"And such of them as do not follow me are no longer my children!"

Promptly, Bertrand and Barthelemy obeyed. Guillemette gnashed her teeth, but she too followed.

And all five went away, without once looking back. . . .

Thomas alone remained behind, his eyes fixed on Juana.

The folk around, believing that he was going to leave her, began to laugh and to mock her, with many a free word, in accordance with the brave customs of men, who never fail to insult and molest an unfortunate woman as soon as she is defenceless. But in this instance, the men of this ilk miscalculated, for Juana was not yet at their mercy. Thomas was still there. And no more was needed than these mocking speeches and too free names to throw him promptly toward his mistress, in spite of old Malo's very positive commands. At the Corsair's impetuous move to the rescue, the mockers as by enchantment grew decorous. And then Thomas and Juana, hand in hand, together passed under the arch and went away —in the opposite direction to that taken by the Trublets.

It had been written, however, that on this day Thomas l'Agnelet was to find his path blocked with all manner of obstacles. Just as, clear of the archway, he was taking the turn to the left, into the street of the Croix du Fief, the more rapidly to reach the street of the Dancing Cat —since henceforth he was to have no home but Juana's dwelling—someone barred his path; and this someone was none other than Louis Guénolé, who, lost in the crowd, had witnessed the whole scene; and, understanding clearly enough that Thomas at a stroke was breaking with his family, he had instinctively made a decision, formed a plan, and was now carrying it out.

He came, therefore, near to Thomas, and said to him:

"Look, brother!"

And Thomas, looking, saw behind Guénolé a woman dressed in black, and a child who was holding on to the woman's skirt—Anne-Marie and her son.

Neither she nor the boy spoke, and Guénolé added no word to those he had already uttered. And yet Thomas, at sight of the three standing before him thus in silent supplication, felt his heart quail in his breast.

Yonder there moved away from him a family which had been his own, and which perhaps would never as his own come back. But was not this a family he thus found again on his path, a family as much his as ever the other had been, a family which could give back to him the home he was losing, and which could even . . . who knows? give him new happiness for the happiness lost?

Suddenly, with her slender fingers—so skilled in those delicate caresses which bend the will of men as storm winds bend frail reeds—Juana pressed her lover's arm, the more quickly to draw him away. And no more was needed; Thomas instantly resolved, with a brutal fist pushed Guénolé out of his way, and with never a glance for either mother or child, now silently weeping, passed on. . . .

## CHAPTER IX

STRANGE life was that Thomas Trublet, Sieur de l'Agnelet led thereafter, a life stranger, indeed, than son of St. Malo had ever lived before. From that day, Thomas Trublet was no more a Trublet than his love of former years, Anne-Marie Kerdoncuff had, for six long years, been a Kerdoncuff. Openly now, and without the slightest concealment, Thomas lived in the house on the rue du Chat qui Danse. And no one ever saw him frequent the house of the rue de la Coudre, never, at any time. Well he knew it was an ill-welcome that there awaited him, for old Malo was of a nature and humour to pardon his son anything rather than public scandal or public disobedience. And hadn't he expressly and in a tone of irrevocable decision clearly declared—as he was about to pass under the archway of the Halles, at the very moment when the fatal scandal occurred, and he ordered his children to follow him—that those who did not obey were no longer his children? . . .

And thus the trench was dug. And this trench, separating Thomas from his family, soon separated him from his friends as well, and from the whole town. Thomas, no longer a Trublet, was soon, in St. Malo, almost no one at all.

Of course, things did not go so badly for Thomas as they had for Anne-Marie. Regardless of what his fellow-townsmen might wish, the Sieur de l'Agnelet still

remained a personage. The little ragamuffins of the streets took good care not to chase him as they had once chased poor Anne-Marie, and the burghers who encountered him in the town ever made it a point of honour to salute him with a wide sweep of the hat. But civilities stopped there. And never did man or woman of repute knock at the door of that house on the street of the Dancing Cat which Thomas and Juana continued to inhabit while waiting for the possession of the fine home which Thomas was now in good earnest seeking. For still he persisted in the hope that, finally, by dint of the style in which he proposed to live, he might conquer the prejudices of his compatriots, and sojourn in their midst as he pleased, in spite of all the old grannies—ultimately regaining his rank among the burghers and, above all, forcing each and every one of them to accept Juana on what terms he decreed.

As to Juana herself, she at first triumphantly rejoiced in the victory thus, almost without effort, gained over the family, and so to speak, the whole motherland of her lover. But soon enough she discovered that the real benefits of her success amounted to precisely nothing at all. What could be clearer indeed? Her position had in no sense been improved by the fact that now Thomas lived in the street of the Chat qui Danse, instead of merely coming there as formerly to visit her. Every single day had he come, indeed, without ever failing. She could now, it is true, go out when she pleased. But there is little pleasure in walking through the streets if the people one meets there display only haughty disdain, and refuse to yield the wallside—when they don't do far worse! The numerous misadventures she experienced soon gave Juana a lively disgust for solitary excursions. Twice—amongst other unpleasant experiences—she had, by an unlucky chance, found herself nose to nose with Guillemette. And Guillemette, more enraged than ever with jealousy, had not lost these favourable opportuni-

ties to pour out a mouthful of insults at her hated rival, the idlers of the town eagerly serving as chorus. And only by the merest trifle in truth had these encounters failed of ending in frantic clawings and scratchings. Juana, little accustomed to exercise restraint over her feelings, and more belligerent even than Guillemette, would quite certainly have been the first to leap at the enemy, had it not been for the crowd of hostile onlookers, not one of whom would for a moment have permitted a countrywoman of theirs to be bullied by the foreign intruder. Of that Juana was well-aware: her chances of victory, whenever the prospective battle should be precipitated, were meagre enough. Sooner or later that fatal moment would arrive; for Thomas's sister now hated her brother with all the strength of the love she had formerly borne him, and of this hatred she had vowed to give him the most cruel and overwhelming proof.

To such a degree, indeed, was this evident that Thomas, duly warned, chose rather to keep close watch over his mistress, going out with her whenever it was possible, and lending her his arm. Juana gained thereby the comfort of being safe from every outrage; and, in addition, she was not insensible to the honour of such company—the most valiant, of a surety, in the entire city. Nevertheless, when the lovers thus traversed even the most populous quarters of the town, the streets mysteriously became deserted as they passed. For if not a single citizen cared insolently to affront the Corsair, neither could any reputable citizen bring himself to salute a woman of less than no account.

Juana then led the life of the plague-stricken, so to speak. And this in a country whose climate and skies had for her no charms, nothing in short to remind her, even dimly, of the brilliant sunshine of Seville, still less that of her Ciudad Real, resplendent with warmth and light, luminous, in short, and glorious as fire.

And Juana, seeing again in her profound reveries the

two dazzling cities that had once been her home, and looking back too on her youth and childhood, equally dazzling, the more so indeed in that they were far removed—Juana, thus comparing the present with the past that seemed to her so infinitely more desirable, began to exhibit certain alarming changes in her nature. . . .

It was in that grim dungeon keep, put to sack by the Adventurers, in the midst of the savage grandeur of a stupendous attack and victory, that she had first been overtaken by love of Thomas. There she had seen her captor in a new rôle. As captain and general in command of all the attacking forces, she beheld him in the rays of a glory so terrible that even monarchs themselves have none like to it in the splendour of their crowns. Captivated then even as much as she was terrified, Juana had obeyed the promptings of vanity rather than love in following the formidable conquerer, who fresh from the slaughter of all her family, offered, in his single person, to take their place in her life. For, in that first moment, she had calculated that as the companion of a king such as he, a monarch by right of courage and power, she too would everywhere be recognized as queen. And now, far from occupying a throne, she found herself reduced to a position such as even the humblest bourgeoise would have refused! True, Thomas held out hopes of a change for the better; but of that change she saw no prospects . . . and, in any case, it could not for a long, long time be brought about. Now as to "a long, long time" . . . patience was in nowise Juana's strong point!

And thus quite suddenly her nature changed, not without cause. And Thomas, after suffering the pain of seeing his beloved discontented and unhappy, soon suffered the torment of being made unhappy by her. Instead of the good understanding which love had brought about between them, the habit of disputes and quarrels grew daily. Once more they addressed one another with the old familiarity of "*tu*" and "*toi*" and it was scarcely

out of more ardent love. Not that they had ceased to love one another! An ever-despotic passion, stronger than all their mutual anger, still threw them into one another's arms; and even, it had befallen them, to yield to the voluptuous delights of the closest embrace at the very height of their most furious discords. But this violent and quarrelsome love, now manifesting itself in capricious and stormy outbursts—although still passion, and strong to boot—was no longer masked by any slightest sign of that tenderness which ever accompanies love. . . .

## CHAPTER X

APRIL had passed, and May and June, shining and rosy months; and then July and August, their tyrannous heat weighing heavily on the whole city, and all its people, men, women, children, and even the watch-dogs of the gates and quays of St. Malo. Of this oppression Juana alone was free, by grace of her almost tropical extraction. And, while all the Breton hides were sweating great beads of sweat, and roasting in the sun like so many turkeys spitted before the logs on the hearth, Thomas's mistress, once more, for the time being at least, pleasant and even-tempered, derived her greatest pleasure from spending her days, as naked nearly as a savage, tirelessly surrendering herself—for she was as sensuous as she was indolent—to the most burning caresses of that which we Bretons call "the midday full moon."

But then came autumn, bringing with it a retinue of rain, fog, and sharp frosts. As the first hailstones rattled against the window-panes, Juana's mood grew sombre as rapidly as the sky itself had changed from blue to grey. And Thomas, to protect himself from too frequent storms, began to absent himself from home, resuming the long solitary walks along the ramparts in which he had formerly consumed so many hours, in the days when St. Malo was still totally unaware of the very existence of this so irritable Juana. . . . Alas, days that would never return. . . .

Now, on an evening in the second fortnight of October,

Thomas, thus walking by himself, encountered Louis Guénolé, who was likewise walking alone. It was not far from the Tour Notre Dame they met, on the Petits Murs, along the curtain above the wharf known as the wharf Bon Secours, and it is on this part of the strand that thieves, murderers, and other evil-doers are buried after being put to death by the executioner. Thomas, absently gazing at this sad and unstable burying ground, had not seen Louis approaching, and the latter, taking his former captain unawares, embraced him, greeting him right affectionately. For whatever had happened in the past, or might still befall, Louis, even though he could not approve his conduct, still loved Thomas warmly, and Thomas continued to cherish Louis with an equal love.

They saw one another frequently besides, for alone of all the citizens of good repute in St. Malo, Louis Guénolé, defying public opinion, had never ceased to frequent the house on the rue du Chat qui Danse. And great merit was his surely for so doing, for if he cared little for the blame his fellow-citizens might mete out to him for this, Louis Guénolé did greatly fear the Evil One and all his works, and the pomp and ruses through which said Evil One works his guile. And much he misdoubted that in frequenting thus the house of a creature who was more than suspect, who, indeed, must to any wary nose, smell of the burning—and in being near such a creature, in speaking to her, and passing the time with her, since this must of necessity occur if he visited the house at all, he was exposing his soul to the most dangerous peril imaginable. Nevertheless, however much he might be terrified by this supreme risk, he preferred to run it—with, of course, the help and protection of all the saints in Paradise—rather than abandon his brother Thomas to a fate which to Louis Guénolé seemed daily to grow more ominous—so far at least as the welfare of his soul was concerned.

Leaning side by side against the parapet of the cur-

tain, they were talking now, Louis and Thomas, and gazing at the sea and the running whitecaps, that were like the fleece of frisking sheep. Across the wintry sky grey clouds were scurrying.

"The season of bitter cold will soon be upon us," Guénolé had just observed, making use of the weather, as the custom is, in working up to a conversation.

"Yes," replied Thomas, as he spoke, drawing a sigh from the depths of his great chest. "And do you know," added he, as though to explain that sigh—"do you know, brother Louis, that it is ever on such melancholy and sombre evenings as these that I most bitterly regret the fair days of other times, and that tropical sun of the Antilles which at the hour of setting never failed to send its blood-red fire streaming over all the sky and all the sea!"

Louis Guénolé spread his arms wide, with an upward gesture of his hands as a sign that well did he too remember. But he gave no answer, so that Thomas had to continue his discourse alone; which he did after a few moments of revery.

"*Oui-da!*" he resumed, as though answering his own words, "it's easy enough to see how it is she cannot grow accustomed to our harsh climate, so different from that of her own land, and ever so bitter and sullen."

He had not mentioned Juana. Louis could not fail to understand him, but remained as silent as before. Whereupon Thomas also grew silent, and laid his hand on his chin, as though about to speak on a matter of importance, though not knowing just how to make a beginning. At last, however, he spoke:

"Sooner or later," said he, in a tone almost of resolution—"sooner or later, I shall have to go back there—or to some other place mayhap. For, I am of the opinion it little becomes a stout lad of St. Malo, not yet in the thirties, to moulder away his life within the four walls of

'a house, no matter how fine and large the house may be!"

With a start Louis Guénolé laid both elbows on the parapet and looked Thomas full in the face.

"Do you then want to start privateering once more?" he asked, and his voice trembled a bit.

"Yes!" said Thomas, speaking very low.

And it was true. That was what Thomas wanted. That is to say, Juana, weary of the disdain displayed by the burghers' wives of St. Malo, weary also of the rigours of the Breton sky, wished once and for all to be rid of them by leaving as soon as might be a land she now abhorred from the very depths of her heart.

And what Juana desired, Thomas desired too. What else, indeed?

For what could he desire if not to see once more on the lips of his mistress and there to savour and enjoy that crimson smile whereto his own life was bound, that smile now extinguished, and withered, and which it really seemed could never bloom again save in the torrid rays of the sun of the tropics—that lascivious sun which alone is ardent enough to bring to fruition those two blossoms equally flaming, the earth-born flower of the Andalusian pomegranate, the sea-born flower of red coral. . . .

"Live here—this way," Thomas continued, speaking in all sincerity, "I cannot, any longer! Oh, brother Louis! Remember what we have seen! Remember our valiant broadsides of yore, and those brave years of battle and plunder, remember the freedom we then enjoyed?—a freedom so great that the King himself, sitting upon his throne with sceptre in hand, has not half the freedom that we then enjoyed! Isn't it true, tell me? Weren't we, in those days so joyously spent between sea and sky, above all laws and rules, and living according to our own good pleasure, in a word, our own masters, after God? *Oui-da*, those who have known such hearty meals can no longer be

nourished or satisfied with the life led within the ramparts of a burgher city, a life by far too cramped and ordinary!"

Louis Guénolé gave a shrug. Of objections there was no lack. But of what use to mention them? For Thomas was one of those who talk little, and only when they are fully resolved, and fourfold at that, to act. And this being so, all the arguments in the world could only shrivel before his resolve. . . .

So, without further ado, Louis Guénolé contented himself with asking:

"And if you are going away, in what manner will you do so?"

That required a long explanation. Thomas, his heart now freed of its greatest burden, felt at ease. And he chose to omit no part of his plans, esteeming Guénolé as of good counsel. Thus he revealed to him in all detail how the Chevalier Danycan, taken unawares by the sudden peace, duly drawn up and signed five weeks prior to this, by the King and the greater part of his enemies, now found himself with six disarmed light frigates on his hands, and for these frigates, now at anchor in Mer Bonne he had no present use. Hence, he desired to sell them, if he could, and even at a loss. Among them was the *Belle Hermine;* and Thomas was now contemplating buying it, certain that the chevalier would readily let him have it sooner than any other purchaser, and for a mere hunch of black bread, so to speak, for Gautier Danycan was an honest fellow if ever there was one, and ever desirous of obliging those who had formerly served him well.

"So be it!" Louis Guénolé acquiesced, uneasy nevertheless, for anxiety grievously troubled him. And this anxiety he resolved no longer to conceal.

"The peace being signed, as it is," said he, "that is to say, by the English and Dutch, as well as the Spaniards, what can you do with your frigate, if the chevalier, bold

as he is in enterprise, dares no longer use it save to sell it for kindling? Bethink you, my Thomas, as matters now stand, the Admiral will refuse to give you any letters of marque."

"*Bah!*" said Thomas, in all confidence and laughing therewith, "the King is of a surety the King, but just as surely is Filibustering Filibustering. Do you then believe that out yonder our Brothers of the Coast—Redbeard, and his damsel, Rackham, and all the others, the Dieppois, and the Venetian, and the Adventurer d'Oléron —have also signed a treaty of peace with the Castillian monkeys? Come, Louis mine, give over your worrying, and have no fear. What the Admiral may refuse, Monsieur d'Ogéron will know well enough how to get for us, even though it might be in the name of the King of Portugal!"

To which Louis knew not what to answer. For seven years earlier had not matters been thus in fact arranged? And what likelihood was there besides that at Nimeguen, where the new peace had been signed, His Majesty's ambassadors, their heads full of warring kingdoms and provinces, had even once bethought themselves that there existed somewhere in the world a place called the Tortoise?

Right joyfully Thomas pursued:

"And now, brother Louis, can't you see us once more casting anchor in the roadstead of that beloved Tortoise of ours, and paying a visit with all due ceremony, upon the Governor, not, as formerly, presenting ourselves in the guise of a mere captain, under orders to a bourgeois and armourer, but in that of a real chief and noble, beholden to no bourgeois or armourer, other than himself, and thus the peer of these illustrious Filibusters, who lend obedience to no one, nay, at times, not even to the King himself!"

Thus Thomas ended his discourse. And Louis, silent and downcast, thought to himself that there was nothing

after all that could be said on that chapter, and that the thing was indeed as good as done.

They had resumed their walk, arm in arm, going where chance might lead. Night was falling, and the wind gave no sign of abating. The briny spray of the heaping waves was flying landward over the beach, falling in a fine drizzle on the curtain of the rampart. Louis, facing the sea, began to draw in great breaths of air, mouth open, as though to fill his lungs and even his belly with the wholesome and brave breath of these Breton waters which, even more than the land, were his real home. . . .

Now, as night was thickening, they made their way back, without heeding their steps, to the approach to the tower of Notre Dame, where they could descend from the rampart, and reenter the town by means of the stairs built into the solid granite of the wall. On reaching the steps they halted just long enough to cast a glance at the noble spectacle of the two islets, Grand Bey and Petit Bey, around which the fast running green-black sea now traced a double girdle of snow-white foam.

And Louis, letting go of Thomas's arm, extended both arms toward the horizon, as though to draw it all within his embrace.

"*Oh, mon frère Thomas!*" cried he, and his voice so cold and restrained ordinarily, shook and vibrated now like that of women when deeply they love—"Oh, my brother Thomas! As you look for the last time on all these things that are our Breton homeland . . . and that to my Breton taste are a thousandfold more fair and joyous than all your American Tortoises, in spite of their azure skies and flaming sun . . . when you look on all this for the last time, will your heart not break for being too full, and will not your eyes drown in tears too bitter-salt?"

Thomas, giving a sudden start, with the back of his hand wiped his forehead, where he felt the sudden moisture of small cold drops of sweat.

But, after a moment or two, quite firmly, he spoke:

"All these things, brother Louis," said he, "shall we not find them even more fair, and sweeter still, when we come back once more, as true and glorious lords, so powerful and of such fame that, willy-nilly, every one will have to bend to our will, and when we pass by, set knee to ground?"

He caught up Guénolé's arm once more, drawing him close, with a gesture both imperious and caressing.

"Brother," said he—"brother Louis, you know well that all those who belong to me by flesh and blood, all my relatives by birth or marriage . . . all those in short whom I have raised to the rank they at present occupy . . . and who now go about high-chested, honoured, and esteemed in the town, with everyone taking their hats off to them with a flourish . . . you know well enough that to-day everyone of them . . . every single one . . . spits on me, casting me off! And you, brother Louis, you who never failed me during our six long years of fighting and privateering . . . you who were ever at my side, ready to protect my body with your own, when shot and shell were falling 'round us thick as hail . . . you, who alone of all my fellow-townsmen do not cast me off, nor spit upon me, but on the contrary hold me dear, watching over me with vigilance and warm love . . . know you this, brother Louis—that henceforth you, and you alone, are to me as father and mother, sister and brother, and all else! And that I desire no other relative save you—you alone, Louis Guénolé, my lieutenant, my mate, my real brother, my Brother of the Coast!"

Impetuously, he held Louis close in a powerful embrace.

"Oh, my brother, brother Louis," said he, "I am going to sea once more, I am going away as far as may be from these evil folk, I am going to take the girl I love away from all of this. Brother Louis, my true brother, and will you let me go alone whither I am going?"

Louis Guénolé gave a sigh; for, from where they stood

on the top of the Notre Dame curtain, he could, by standing on tiptoe, catch a glimpse, beyond the Placitres and the lane of the Petits-Chaux, of the gable of his ancestral home, situated, as we know, on the rue de la Herse. And very dear was that house to the heart of this good son and pious Malouin. Nevertheless, he did not hesitate, not even two seconds by the clock. For as Thomas repeated,

"Louis, brother Louis, and will you then let me go alone?" Guénolé warmly returned embrace for embrace, and as he did so—"*La!*" said he, "well you know that I will not! How could I?"

And now all was said. Never again did they revert to that which had passed between them. For on some page or other of God's Great Book it had been written that, throughout life, and even in death, Louis Guénolé should never abandon his captain—his captain of former days, now his captain forever—and that Thomas l'Agnelet, starting out once more for the Islands, in search of adventure and cruises through unknown seas, should take with him, and keep close beside him as lieutenant, mate, brother, and Brother of the Coast, his faithful Louis Guénolé, for such time as God deigned to preserve them in this life. . . .

## CHAPTER XI

S so many times before he had done, Louis Guénolé, once more lieutenant of Thomas's frigate, began to make all ready on the *Belle Hermine*, in view of the approaching departure. And though he did not neglect even the smallest matter—still less that of enrolling a crew of seasoned sailors, every man of them ripe for adventure and fearless—nevertheless, this he accomplished in so discreet a fashion that not a soul in the town knew what was afoot. And this was no mean advantage, for the arming, in peace time, of a Corsair frigate would, if known, have set a flea in the ears of the Admiralty folk; and it behooved Thomas to avoid all explanations with these gentlemen of the Admiralty until such time as the papers of the *Belle Hermine*, duly executed by the efforts of the obliging Sieur d'Ogéron, assured to Thomas and his men the right to cruise in all waters, with twenty eighteen-pound cannon by way of cargo, and by way of victuals—of the choicest—a gun-room full of freshly cast cannon-balls, and well-stowed barrels of gunpowder.

Thus not a soul in all St. Malo knew of Thomas l'Agnelet's resolve once more to put to sea. Juana alone heard of it from the Corsair's own lips; but there was no risk of the secret's being betrayed by her. As for Guénolé, he had breathed no word of the matter, not even to his father or mother, though much did this secrecy cost him, he being a loving and tender son such as is sel-

dom more found in these degenerate times! And the lads chosen for the crew were under strict orders not to talk, under pain of having their names stricken from the crew's list. If they whispered at all regarding what was up, it was only among themselves, over a tankard at the inn, behind closed doors. The news never issued from their lips save to drown in flagon and bowl. Not a burgher or lord or notable was apprised of Thomas's purpose, still less the Trublets themselves.

And thus old Malo and Perrine never even suspected that their lad, whom they continued secretly to cherish, even as the father and mother of the Prodigal Son continued to love him while he was afar from them—we have the word of the Gospels for it—thus, I say, old Perrine and Malo, never dreaming that Thomas was on the eve of wandering equally far from them, and leaving them in like manner, made no fatherly or motherly gesture which might have held him back, but remained close by the hearth, convinced that sooner or later their son would grow weary of his wicked bawd, and would send her about her business, returning then to beg a forgiveness they desired so speedily to grant. Thus they deceived themselves, later bitterly regretting that they had not been more clearsighted, and more forgiving also. For Thomas, suffering, as we have seen, from being cut off from his kin, and from the hostility displayed toward him by the entire town, had reached a state of mind where but one sign of affection from his family would perhaps have held him back, binding him to that native soil which in spite of everything was still dear to his Breton heart. But this sign had not been made. . . .

Guillemette, however, ever lying in wait for her brother and his "Moorish strumpet"—this was the term of cordial familiarity she reserved for Juana—had caught wind of something afoot. Some servant girls whom she was in the habit of rewarding with cast-off ribbons, kerchiefs, and diverse gewgaws, had brought her news of the sale made

by the Chevalier Danycan of his *Belle Hermine* to Thomas, and also of the arming of the frigate by Louis Guénolé. This news the damsels had learned from their sweethearts, sailors, chandlers' agents, and clerks of the notary who had drawn up the deed of sale. Guillemette then, putting two and two together, never doubted that these events foreshadowed the prompt departure of the Corsair; she might, therefore, have handed on this information to her parents. And this, perhaps, she would have done, though she was still very bitter against Thomas, if, passing one day down the street d'Entre les Deux Marchés, she had not there stopped to admire a fine building all of fresh-hewn granite, with three branches of flowering gorse waving above its roof—the masons' sign that the work was completed. And very near had she come to choking with rage when she learned that this building, a mansion of the finest sort, had on the very eve of that day changed owners, and that the purchaser and new master of the dwelling was none other than the Sieur de l'Agnelet in person, and that he had paid four thousand crowns in ringing gold coin for it—a sum at which the idlers standing round marvelled much, for it was a handsome bit of money.

"So," thought the jealous girl, her jealousy at once exasperated, "so, this bawd, this no-better-than-a-Negress is soon to lodge in a palace it seems! And we shall see her playing the princess, while her lover, that fourfold idiot and cuckold of a Thomas, continues to defy me to his heart's content! Well then, let him start off to-morrow on his cursed frigate, and take his Moorish strumpet away with him, and may he go so far that I'll never hear of him again, or of her either!"

Whereupon she promptly made a vow, promising Our Lady de Bon Secours a taper all of white wax, and sixteen pounds in weight, on condition that never in their lives should Thomas and Juana be permitted to set foot

in the sumptuous mansion of the rue d'Entre Deux Marchés.

Following which, Guillemette took good care not to warn a soul of Thomas's projected voyage, for fear that some obstacle thereto might be raised. And thus did it come about that Malo Trublet and Perrine, and their sons Bertrand and Barthelemy, and their son Jan likewise, who had just returned from a cruise in the East Indies, remained to the very last unaware of the approaching departure of their other son and brother. And by this means also it came about that nothing occurred to prevent this departure, or to render it less bitter or less cruel.

The appointed day was drawing near. Scarcely a week now remained. Louis Guénolé was spending all his time on the frigate to make sure that not so much as a whistle was lacking and that everything was in perfect order. Thomas had chosen to weigh anchor on the day of St. Barbe, patron saint of gunners and all folk who make powder talk. That day—the fourth of December—in that year of 1678, fell on a Sunday.

Now nine days before, on Friday, the twenty-fifth of November, Thomas, who had wanted with his own eyes to inspect the *Belle Hermine* from stem to stern, was returning toward the city accompanied by Louis Guénolé. They had landed at the Vieux Quai, and were making their way towards the postern of the Croix du Fief, going along the ramparts, and taking their time like people who have no cause for haste. And Thomas, to make conversation, was relating the latest exploit of the viperous Guillemette: hadn't she, two days agone, slyly followed Juana to the latter's very door, there to throw a basinful of dirty water full upon her, soiling, indeed ruining, Juana's satin gown?

Louis Guénolé, silent, shook his head, and walked along, eyes on the ground. Thomas, by way of concluding, slashed the air sword-like with his arm.

"But anyway," said he, "what does it matter to me? This demon of a Guillemette is nothing to me now, and her accursed tantrums have no longer power to move me. Haven't I said to you: 'Trublet am I no longer? Agnelet am I now, Agnelet and nothing more, from this hour. Those who have cast me off, I too cast off.' If you love me, Louis, from this time forward speak to me no more of them!"

They were drawing near the postern. Suddenly, Louis Guénolé stopped short, and looked at Thomas.

"Nor of other folk either?" he asked, and his voice was grave, and almost pleading in tone. "Am I not to speak to you of other folk either?—of a woman dressed in black, or of her child, who is your child too?"

In Thomas's eyes, that, like the sea water they resembled, were quick to change, he tried to find support for the prayer in his own eyes, dark in colour as black night.

But Thomas, without hesitating, looked back at him straight; and then came to place both hands on his shoulders.

"God forbid," said he, "that I should ever return evil for good, or confuse good folk with evil, as though they were all bad. As to Anne-Marie and the bastard, I have made this plan, that you are now to know. The mansion on one of the new streets of the town, that I was contriving to buy for myself and my Juana, I have in effect bought, and am now furnishing with fine new furniture —good beds all fitted out with linen, and fine dishes in the cupboards. When all is ready, I shall make a gift of the whole, by due process of law, to the boy, and his mother, she to possess the use of it, so long as she lives, and he to inherit it. The papers are to be signed at the notary's no later than to-morrow. Go see the house. It is close to your own home, on the street d'Entre les Deux Marchés; you can see for yourself what a fine dwelling it is. There shall Anne-Marie live henceforth, and have

beside enough crowns of ringing gold to pay for whatever she takes a fancy to, as well as keep up the property without skimping, and thus will she, with the boy, be able to rank among the people of means in the town. And may all St. Malo burst with spite over it, beginning with that spit-cat of a Guillemette!"

He let go of Louis's shoulders to take three steps back. And turning around he added, to himself, in silence, mouth tight shut, and moving neither tongue nor lips—"And for this may the Christ of the Ravelin, and also the Virgin of the Grand' Porte, whom I once so rashly called to witness over the body of the dying Vincent Kerdoncuff, absolve me from the sin of perjury!"

Louis Guénolé meanwhile, what with joy and emotion, had begun to weep. But then, having taken thought—

"Ha!" said he, "you are greatly generous, and I love you for it. But, believe me or not, as you choose, in spite of all your generosity, this girl-mother we speak of would still have preferred a father for her little one, and for herself, a husband. . . ."

With a start, as though he had, at the words, received a sharp wound, Thomas laid his hand on the lad's mouth to keep him from saying more. Then, dropping both arms, and letting them hang limp against his body, "I don't love her!" he said, repeating once more, what he had repeated so many times. And he seemed like to a man weighed down and crushed by a burden too heavy for his strength. . . .

They passed through the postern then, and walked down the streets of the town. The Breton rain was falling in fine, spray-like drops. Thomas, with his heavy tread, slipped now and then on the pavement already greasy with damp, and Louis steadied him time and again with his arm.

Now as they reached the corner of the street of the Three Kings, a beggar woman, so old and skinny that it

was a pity to see, held out towards them her grimy claw, asking alms in the name of great St. Catherine, whose feast-day it was, as it happened. Thomas, ever prodigal with his money, tossed into this claw a coin worth six good pounds. Whereupon the beggarwoman, dazzled as though by the sun itself, folded up in her rags like a jack-knife, in a curtsy which brought her forehead down to the very mud. Then, hastily clutching at the hem of the Corsair's cloak, "God be with you, your lordship," she cried, in a voice like to the bleating of a flock of goats, "God be with you! And return to you your alms a thousandfold! God be with you! *Oui-da!* Yet, just the same, give your hand to old Marie Chienperdu, and let her tell your fortune, to preserve you as far as may be from the sharp teeth of your enemies. . . . Give me your hand, *oui-da!* So good old Marie can read your fate for you, from beginning to end—good, bad, night and day, Gog and Magog—the way the Gypsies taught me!"

Astonished, and indeed, in some alarm, Thomas stopped short.

"The Gypsies?" he repeated.

"The Gypsies, *oui-da!*" shrilled the beggarwoman, "the Gypsies, the Bohemians, and the Saracens, all bad, wicked people, who stole me from my parents when I was a slip of a maid. But the Holy Virgin Mary protected me because she's my patron saint, and because I prayed to her with every scrap of prayer I know. And so the cursed heretics who had stolen me and were keeping me from my people, they were all brought to death, hanged and burned, a tree branch for some, and faggots for others; and as to me, here I am still, my good master!"

Thomas, without further weighing the matter, gave her his left hand.

"Look, if it gives you pleasure," said he.

At hearing the old hag so piously naming God's Holy Mother he had been greatly reassured concerning the

possibly impious nature of the pagan practices she mentioned. Guénolé, on the contrary, hostile to all black art, had quickly stepped back until he stood in the shelter of the penthouse of an adjoining building, and from there looked with suspicious eyes at the fortune-teller.

"*Ho!*" said she, scrutinising the Corsair's palm with her blinking eyes, "in good sooth that's a proud noble hand, my good lord!"

She touched it with her own fingers—as fleshless as the fingers of a skeleton—turning it this way and that, in order, doubtless, to examine it from every angle.

"Many battles are here, many victories, and great glory . . . much gold also, and silver. *Ho!* Is it possible to have such good fortune, and to have such success in nearly every undertaking? . . . Ah! sometimes, though . . . be on your guard against a dark man . . . a foreigner, a bawdy fellow . . . on your guard against this man . . . and guard your lady well besides. . . ."

Thomas, frowning, pondered.

"A foreigner?" he asked.

"*Oui-da!*" said the old woman, "a rascal, a Gypsy, or Bohemian, or Saracen or such like! . . . but a handsome fellow too, sure. On your guard though . . . you have need. It's written here as clear as rain water."

"What else?"

"What else? . . . in truth. . . . What else? . . . *hé la!* . . . What's in my way? . . . Why can't I read it plain?"

Abruptly, she dropped his hand, gave a start backwards, and raised to Thomas's face the glance of her sunken eyes, now suddenly grown anxious.

"What now?" asked Thomas, in surprise.

"*Hélas!*" said she, "*hélas!* Your pardon, sir, if I offend! But it's not my fault . . . the thing is so plain . . . see rather . . . it's, as one might say, a red cloud . . . a red cloud . . ."

"But what then?"

"Blood. . . ."

She had bent nearly double, one elbow timidly raised to protect her old head. Thomas, expecting far worse, burst out laughing.

"Blood?" he repeated, "blood in my palm? . . . *Sapergouenne*, old woman, you would have been blind, indeed, if you hadn't found some. For I've shed more than my share, serving the King. Come then, and look through such a brave cloud as that. What now do you see?"

But the old hag still shook her head.

"Other blood is this," said she, "other blood than that you mention . . . other blood!"

"*Bah!*" said Thomas, "and what blood then?"

She took his hand again and held it up, so the side of it pointed downward.

"The blood said she," hesitantly, "of someone who is here near you . . . here, close at hand. . . ."

In spite of himself, Thomas gave a rapid glance down the deserted street. Not so much as a cat was to be seen. Guénolé alone was there, under the penthouse near by. Thomas swallowed, and bravely, burst again into a laugh.

"Here, close at hand?" said he mockingly. "Here, close at hand, there's no great crowd! Come, old granny, put on your spectacles, and have done with this blood, which is of no great consequence anyway. And go on, now. What do you see more?"

Half-reassured, she looked again, raising his great hand, and holding it wide open, fingers upward.

"*Heu!*" she mumbled, all of a tremble again, "*heu!* blood upsets all the signs . . . all the same, with study, it comes clear. But look you here, look yourself, sir . . . this line, so deep and red, that runs from here to here, well! . . . it's as one might say your destiny . . . the spitting image . . . it's yourself, master!"

He bent his head to one side, screwing up his eyes the

more clearly to make out this mysterious line that revealed so much.

"That's me, you say?" said he at last, "me, that rascal of a line frisking and zigzagging here through the hollow of my hand? So be it then. But come now, look at it properly and speak out: whither am I bound and what says the very end of the furrow?"

As he spoke, the old woman, who was still closely examining the waiting hand, gave a great shudder, and made a frightful grimace, as though terrified by a sudden horrible vision. Again Thomas questioned her. Stammering, she sought her words, unable at first to speak; and her voice had now quite changed, and was grown hoarse, and hollow.

"Very high you're going. . . ."

"Very high?" said Thomas, instinctively looking up at the roofs and gables round about. "And what is this high place to which I'm bound?"

Without any explanation she repeated it again.

"Very high."

Jestingly he asked:

"So, I'm to sit on a throne too?"

She shrank in on herself, pulling her neck down between her shoulders.

"Higher than that," said she, "higher than that. . . ."

Astonished enough, Thomas turned towards Louis, questioning him with a glance. But that very instant the old witch—her teeth chattering with a terror real or mayhap feigned, fled away abruptly, running as fast as her worn old legs could carry her, as though the thousand devils of Hell were at her heels. . . .

Thomas did not pursue her.

"Nonsense, and fool's talk!" he contented himself with saying, profoundly disappointed.

He took the silent Guénolé's arm in his, and they went their way, leaning the one on the other with all brotherly affection.

And when, nine days later, they weighed anchor, the above-mentioned old witch of the street of the Three Kings—they had seen no more of the old beldame, or of her prophecies either—had clean gone out of their heads. And they were not to come into the thoughts of either one of them for many a long day. . . .

# BOOK VI

# GENTLEMEN OF FORTUNE

## CHAPTER I

THE *Belle Hermine* had that very day dropped anchor in the port of the Tortoise. Not far from her a brigantine also rode at anchor, this brigantine bearing the name of the *Flying King* and having as captain the Filibuster Edward Bonny. And thus it seemed that nothing at all had changed since the day of Thomas's first arrival in the American Indies, although that arrival was now actually seven long years past. And Thomas himself, talking in his cabin, as he had done on that earlier occasion, with the self-same Redbeard, might have been the first to be deceived into believing that he had by some mysterious magic been carried back to the past, if Redbeard in person had not—as soon as the bowls of wine dedicated to the reunion had been drunk—taken good care to disabuse him of any such poetic and romantic illusion, providing his old companion and Brother of the Coast with many a proof of the fact—deplorable enough in good sooth—that they were now in the year of grace 1679, and not at all in the year of grace 1672.

"What then!" Thomas had exclaimed, dumbfounded, "and can the difference be so great? What the devil does it matter, to me or to you, that we are less young than

formerly we were? Years find no dent to hook to in lads such as we. I swear to you that I feel neither more nor less sound of foot or eye than ever I did in those days—and as to my teeth, they have only grown the sharper!"

"Hollo!" cried Redbeard, giving his friend a mighty slap on the rump, "hollo! comrade! That's how I love to see you! And may the Grand Cric eat me alive if we don't soon, you and I, run off together to give those deuced sharp teeth of yours a chance to tear at some Spanish hide or other! And hot curses on whoever says 'no!' to that! Just the same, take the truth from me, my boy. The times aren't what they used to be—not by many a tankard full—as you shall see. Rot my tongue, my hearty, but I've seen the days when Filibustering amounted to something. Well, damn me, but I see the time coming when Filibustering won't have a leg to stand on, or this Tortoise of ours, either! . . . Yes! And may a triple pox rot the guts of them that's the cause of it!"

At which Thomas, understanding not a whit of this discourse, inquired, "Them that's the cause of it? And who are they? And the cause of what? By all the devils in the cauldron, speak out! What's wrong then? You don't mean that anyone hereabout dares make game of such as you and me?"

The Filibuster, plunging into the intricate detail of explanations, thereupon most copiously replied. . . .

True enough it was that Filibustering was now threatened with total discomfiture, such as could be avoided only at the cost of a real revolution and the thousand changes such revolution would bring with it in all the usages and laws prevailing on the coast. Of this discomfiture the cause was none other than the treaty of universal peace signed eight or ten months previous by the Kings of France and Spain, and the Republic of the United Provinces.

As an extraordinary exception to the course of history,

a quite unique event, in fact, and in striking contrast to all that had ever before been done, the two princes now conciliated, and with them the United Provinces of Holland, had actually taken it into their heads to extend the peace they had made to every part of the world, to America, neither more nor less than to Germany and Flanders. Wherefore the French Governors of the Antilles, beginning with the Sieur de Cussi Tarin, who had succeeded the Sieur d'Ogéron, lately deceased, now refused to assist or render any manner of aid to any Filibuster whatsoever in his privateering or diverse other enterprises. Worse still, Filibustering could not even count on the authorities to close their eyes to it, allowing it at least to sojourn in French roadsteads and ports, lacking this, the very existence of the Adventurers must soon become impossible.

"So be it!" Thomas interrupted, when Redbeard had reached this point in his commentaries, "but even though the worst should happen? Can't Filibustering get along without approval, just as it gets along without support? Didn't you yourself, years ago, urge me to give chase to our private enemies, with never a care as to whether they were or were not the enemies of my King, any more than of yours? And why is it not the same now as it was then?"

"*Eh! Ventre!* because then my King, and yours likewise, took little thought of being obeyed beyond home waters! And because henceforth your King, if not mine —and damnation on them both for it!—will require his cursed commands to be respected even here. Of this, I was lately assured, I, Bonny, by that wretched Cussi—the same who now governs our Tortoise—when he refused to give me the letters of marque I sought of him month before last, when I wished to join an expedition in command of one of our Brothers—Grammont by name—to the coast of Cumana. Nor did this Cussi conceal from me that the royal squadrons are shortly coming hither

to cruise in our waters, and to constrain us, by force if need be, to give over our adventuring, and to abandon the manner of life proper to folk such as we. Yes! So it is, I tell you!"

Arms crossed and brows knit, Thomas followed this discourse.

*Ça!*" said he suddenly. "Brother Bonny, take good count now, and see if you're right. Do you remember the day I left these parts to go back to the homeland?"

"Yes," said Redbeard, "the Grand Cric swallow me, if it was not but a few months after the capture of Ciudad Real. And I had just bought this new *Flying King* paying therefore with my share of the booty—and that's now two years past.

"Two years," Thomas repeated. "Two years then, since I weighed anchor out of our Tortoise, to set sail, all lined with gold, for my town St. Malo. And think you that I could not, yonder, have gone on living at my ease, and right handsomely too? Yet I have come back with intention to live here. I have come back because, having once made adventuring my trade, I can't live as a burgher. But, *pardieu!* since this is so, it's adventuring and not burghering that I came here to seek. And let me now tell you this: that neither the Cussi, nor his royal squadrons, nor the King's orders, even, can keep me, Thomas, Sieur de l'Agnelet—for it's of noble rank I am now—from giving chase to whomever I will, whether I have a dozen letters of marque or whether I have not one."

He took breath, his lungs empty from so long a speech spoken without pause. Then, cutting short the approving hurrahs of the English Filibuster, "*Sapergouenne!*" said he, with a sudden great burst of laughter, "listen to this, brother Bonny: last year this King you speak of, and that you so heartily send to the devil, this French King of mine, Louis le Grand—for the reason that I had captured, pillaged, and scuttled, sunk or burned some

hundred of the enemy's ships—many were so treated before any declaration of war, as well you remember—King Louis, I say, because of this, sent for me to court, and with his own royal mouth, praised me, complimenting and congratulating me, in addition making me, as I just told you, a real lord and noble, with parchments, letters patent, escutcheons painted with all manner of curlicues, and other famous gewgaws such as you can imagine! *Oui-da!* And this adventure of mine is no more than a year old! . . . Would you then have me believe, and could you or anyone else convince me, that this same King, having thus rewarded me no longer ago than last year for performing certain acts, would this year take it into his head to punish me or find fault with me, for repeating the same acts he so praised? *Nenni!* I'm not such a fool!"

He got up from his chair, concluding as follows, while Redbeard, convinced and radiant, with furiously affectionate fists belaboured Thomas's broad shoulders.

"And now, all is said! To save delays, I shall neither visit the Sieur Cussi Tarin, nor ask aught of him, since he would but refuse it to me too. But so soon as we have taken on food and water, I weigh anchor, and *à Dieu vat!* . . . You, Bonny, come if you will, and join this hunt with me! By this shall I steer, since the King of France refuses to acknowledge that he has any enemies; my enemies shall be all ships of all nations carrying cargo on any sea, France alone excepted, and the Filibusters, and your own England. Here's the crucifix and the Bible. Swear we then mutual faith, as custom is, if so you please."

Redbeard drew from his belt a boarding-axe, and held it in his left hand, blade up:

"This is what I choose to swear on," said he. "And here, on this sharp axe-blade, shall we henceforth take oath, every man of us, who, Filibusters of yore, shall yet, if we must, survive Filibustering, and, Adventurers or

Corsairs that we were, shall, if so constrained, become Knights of the High Seas, and Gentlemen of Fortune!"

"Gentlemen of Fortune, so be it!" said Thomas. And on the edge of the boarding-axe he, Thomas l'Agnelet, was the first to take oath.

## CHAPTER II

THUS, from the very first day of his return to the Tortoise, Thomas l'Agnelet, on his *Belle Hermine*, took up privateering again, and began once more to rake the seas, as formerly he had done, giving no heed as to whether times had changed or not. . . .

And there were others like him besides, who continued to give chase to and capture every ship that sailed these waters—the Filibusters of other days, all those at least who had so far escaped the numberless perils of this dangerous manner of life—tempests, reefs, cannon-shots, quartian fevers, and other amenities of like ilk, excellently devised for quickly leading a man from life to death. And these hardy lads, whose souls seemed to be right fast pegged to their bodies, were like him too in caring not a whit for the commands, proclamations, and interdicts that all the Kings of Christendom might, with empty pretension, rain upon them. Resolved to overstep all restrictions, whatever betide, even though they might be forced to exchange their present rank of Adventurers for that of Gentlemen of Fortune, they merely redoubled the boldness of their exploits, as though to hurl defiance at these distant monarchs who now presumed to bring even Filibustering under their control. Thomas, then, ranging between Cape Catoche and Port of Spain, Florida, and Venezuela, encountered in turn all those whom he had known before; and many a time, for many a joint enterprise, he allied himself with them, affixing his signature to a division of spoils, or swearing

his faith on the axe-blade: for they were all there, all the sea-huntsmen of yore—the Dieppois, more corpulent and more reckless than ever, the Adventurer d'Oléron, ever sturdy and pickled in the brine of Huguenot hypocrisies, Mary Rackham, the girl Filibuster, still bound in a fashion to Redbeard, though she had many a time—so it was asserted—deceived him with Loredano; nevertheless, she still continued to sail the seas and to fight side by side with her Bonny, on his *Flying King;* and many others there were also, whom Thomas knew but a little or not at all, save by reputation: the Frenchman Grammont, who had but a short time before taken by storm the town of Puerto Caballo, on the Cumana coast, a feat of which Redbeard had apprised Thomas, and not without some praise for the performance; a Fleming from Ostend, Van Horn by name, skilful in the handling of ships; a Dutchman—or so he claimed to be, at least—who gave out his name as Laurent de Graaf—a clever cannoneer; in short, all the leaders of Filibustery, which, in danger of its life, because of the too peaceable intentions of certain powerful monarchs, was now in furious haste to live, and was doubling and tripling the glorious mouthfuls of war it snatched wheresoever it could.

And so active was it, indeed, that diverse governors and lieutenants-general of the Kings of France and England, even though expressly charged by their masters to stamp out all illegitimate privateering, and to impose peace on the Corsairs, were moved to admiration for the prodigious courage and ever-triumphant energy of the very Adventurers they were in duty bound to proscribe. And, accordingly, these governors and lieutenants-general studied to evade their orders, and even began once more, in secret, to favour Filibustery. Among them was the Sieur de Cussi Tarin, who went so far as to return to several of the French captains the letters of marque he had but shortly before taken from them. "Thus," thought he—for he too, like the deceased Sieur d'Ogéron

before him—was a man of stout heart, and ever helpful to doughty folk—"thus," thought he to himself, "at the cost of a lesser evil, a greater will be avoided; for these over belligerent captains will of a surety grow obstinate, and make war upon all edicts and ordinances. And, not being able to persuade them that they must not so do, I prefer rather to see them act as Corsairs than as pirates. For in such fashion I preserve these doughty subjects to His Majesty, and for this His Majesty will have ample reason to congratulate himself on the day when his enemies will once more force him to draw the sword."

Thus, from the month of April, 1679, to May, 1682, Thomas, privateering, as he had been wont formerly to do, and pillaging all the ships he encountered, without any frivolous distinction of flag or port of sailing, manned as prizes twenty Spanish ships, eight Dutch ships, three Portuguese, two Flemish, one Dane, five of diverse nationalities, and three claiming no nationality at all. To these hulls, presumably belonging to the enemy, numbering in all no less than forty-two, must be added four ships at first presumed to be friendly (for three of them flew the English flag, the fourth that of France), but with which for numerous lamentable reasons, the *Belle Hermine* had been forced to come to blows. And this entire number, constituting a considerable booty, was sold to good advantage, part of it at the Tortoise, part of it in the markets of Jamaica, part in San Domingo and St. Christopher. As her share in the prize, Juana was allotted, to keep if she would, many a fine gem and precious pearl, with which she did not fail to adorn herself to such a point that, fairly covered with jewels, she greatly resembled that very Brunette of the Macareña, who was the object of Juana's most ardent devotions.

For Juana, as profoundly cherished as ever by her lover, or more so indeed, still continued to live, haughty

and indolent, on this *Belle Hermine* which now was as her very home, and of which she proudly imagined herself to be the mistress and bourgeoise, with Thomas serving but as its captain or indeed, its lieutenant.

Juana had now reached her twentieth year; and at this age, which in Andalusians corresponds to twenty-five or thirty with our French women—for the reasons that in southern countries the greater ardour of the sun ripens all creatures earlier—at this age then, all her rare beauties of face and figure, the like of which Thomas had never in his life beheld, had come to full and magnificent bloom. It is neither a lie nor poetic exaggeration to say that throughout the entire duration of these new cruisings—the last privateering of Filibustery—Juana appeared so dazzling and desirable to every eye she encountered, that a veritable wake of burning and savage passion was soon to follow her, a wake daily growing wider and more tumultuous. And these passions nothing less than the profound terror which the name of Thomas l'Agnelet now inspired throughout the Americas, and even in the most reckless of the Adventurers themselves, could have restrained and mastered.

As for Thomas, terrible as he was, all the more terrible, indeed, in proportion as the number of battles he fought increased—battles of which he had lost not even one—he remained none the less wholly enslaved by his mistress, and daily more subdued, body and soul, to her will. Not wholly because of her beauty, irreproachable though that might be. There were better reasons—and worse. Juana, more warmly loving, more avid with desire—her childhood now outgrown, and a woman henceforth, like our mother Eve after the serpent had educated her—by a thousand rare and voluptuous practices strengthened and redoubled the despotic control she had long since established and daily more tyrannously exercised over the Corsair.

And so it was true enough that, as we have just said,

she was actually in command on the *Belle Hermine;* she it was, not Thomas, who determined whether or not this or that thing was to be done, and whether the helm should be set on this destination rather than that; whether to give chase to a sail sighted to southwards or to another made out to northwards; in short, she ceased to give orders only at the moment when a fight was about to begin—that is to say, when the guns had been loaded. And Louis Guénolé, who could never grow used to the girl's redoubtable fancies, trembled to think that some day she might even push a step farther, and insist upon taking command of the *Belle Hermine* even in battle.

Nor was such an event so unlikely. For Juana was in no wise one of those timorous creatures who are frantic with terror, and indeed thrown into a faint, by the very sound of a pistol-shot. Quite the contrary; this strange damsel was better pleased to strut about in the very thick of the most furious fray than anywhere else, and when bullets were rattling thick and fast might by anyone be seen tranquilly walking about, on the poop-deck, in all her fine clothes, disdainfully offering her bare breast to the mortal caresses of shot and shell and taking great sniffs of the harsh and cruel fumes of gunpowder.

Aside from such promenades as these, Thomas's mistress rarely left her cabin, spending all her time on the endless intricacies of her toilet, in nonchalant reveries, or in love-making. For the two lovers, now giving full sway to their mutual and imperious desires, granted one another neither truce nor mercy, furiously bruising body and flesh in the wanton transports of a passion that far more resembled hatred than love. Many a time did the sailors of the frigate marvel to see their captain stumble as, in the morning, he sought to climb the ladder, going then, pale as death, to lean on the railing of the quarter-deck, the while Juana's mulatto slave-girl smiled as she saw the great dark haloes encircling her mistresses's still humid eyes. . . .

In this fashion, for three years and more did the *Belle Hermine* sail the seas, carrying these oddly assorted and implacable lovers through a thousand dangers and adventures. Unmindful were they of anyone but themselves, as heedless of the grave, pious Guénolé, who in this company appeared much like a saint astray in the inferno—as of the hundred or so brave lads of St. Malo. Honest Corsairs and loyal subjects of the King, but awhile since, these last had made quick work of sliding into Filibustery and were continuing to slide still farther into it, by dint of warfare carried on, in the midst of the universal peace, against every flag that flew, and by dint also of constantly recruiting to their number Adventurers from every nation. For malignant fevers, and the enemy's fire made great inroads on the crew; and Thomas was forced ever to seek new comrades here and yon, on English soil, or Dutch, or French or even Spanish.

## CHAPTER III

THREE years had passed, nothing of note occurring in any one of them to distinguish it from the others. Then in May, 1682, an event occurred which, though of quite ordinary appearance, was, nevertheless, fraught with redoubtable complications.

Thomas, returning from the Cayes de Cuba where he had put in to have the *Belle Hermine* careened, had just signed, with several others of the captains of Filibustery, a division of spoils for an expedition in which all were to join, on Puerto Bello, following the example of the English Adventurer Morgan who had captured it some ten or fifteen years earlier, and put it to ransom in fine style, after having held the city for ten whole months, under the very nose of Don Juan Perez de Guzman, President of Panama. An example such as this deserved to be followed, and it was not likely that in so doing one could fail to acquire both riches and glory. Puerto Bello is, in fact, the chief mart on the Atlantic of all the American kingdoms that Nature has drawn away from Europe, as one might say, orienting them towards the Southern Sea, the "Pacific" as it is sometimes called. And it is there, as everyone knows, that all those prodigious cargoes of gold and silver, yearly derived by Mexico and Peru from their inexhaustible mines, are assembled before they set out for Spain on the galleons of His Catholic Majesty.

The said division of spoils then had duly been signed at Isle aux Vaches—a better place for this purpose than

the Tortoise, for the Governor, who resided at the latter port, however much his earlier severity had softened by little and little, still contrived to oppose a thousand obstacles and a thousand difficulties to any ambitious enterprise of the Filibusters. The shortest cut to action then was to act without his knowing what was afoot. The rendezvous was to take place at the anchorage of the Isle of Vieille Providence, lying off the coast of Nicaragua, just at the outlet from the roads of Puerto Bello. Everything thus agreed upon, and most wisely determined, Thomas put up sail on the 19th of May under the protection of good St. Yves, whose feast-day falls on this date, and set his helm hard on the meeting-place, certain that he would find there assembled the greater number of his Coast Brothers, nearly all of whom had left for this destination three or four days earlier.

And in fact, on the 22nd of May, after a three days' crossing of the best one might hope for, as the *Belle Hermine* sailed straight into the channels leading to anchorage, she found two ships there before her, both much heavier of scantling than herself, and both flying the white pavillon of the Filibusters. Thomas, full heedless, as was his habit, never for a moment doubted that these two ships were those of the Captains Laurent de Graaf, and Van Horn, who were to form part of the expedition, and whom he knew to be in command of sizable ships. Thus was he profoundly surprised and disagreeably, to boot, when of a sudden the two supposed Filibusters, striking the ensigns they flew, ran up the flag of Castille in their place, at the same moment opening fire. By good luck the prudent Guénolé, shrewder than his chief, had suspected the ruse, and, under pretext of exchanging salutes had, much to the purpose, opened the gun-room, and ordered the gunners to their places. The *Belle Hermine* was thus enabled to make quick work of returning fire. None the less she found herself hard pressed and in a tight pass, with no room to manœuvre against her

two vastly superior assailants. For this was an ambush designedly prepared by the express order of the President of Panama, which personage, who was both Governor in Chief of the civil population, and Captain-General of all the Spanish troops stationed in Peru, had vowed to the King his master that he would wipe out Filibustery from the Americas, or perish at his task. Warned by his spies of the undertaking planned against Puerto Bello, he had determined, in order to prevent it from being put into execution, to send a large squadron to the Isle of Vieille Providence, with orders to destroy one after another, or to disperse, all the Corsair ships as each arrived in turn at the meeting-place. And thus Laurent and Van Horn had both been forced to retreat before several ships of the line. Less lucky than they, Thomas found himself forced into an unequal combat with the rear guard of the squadron, the two ships above mentioned together disposing of sixty-six cannon against the *Belle Hermine* who, as we know, carried but twenty.

However, fighting one against three, or even four, was nothing new for these Adventurers. Ten times in his life, at least, had Thomas prevailed against worse odds. Without at all marvelling at the event, Thomas set about doing his work as a Corsair, and the Spaniards soon discovered that they had been rash indeed to engage such an enemy without having at their command the assistance of an entire fleet. Vainly and desperately they fought, firing and sending off great broadsides, scarcely taking time to find the range, while the accurate fire of the frigate chopped them fine as mincemeat. In vain did they howl with all their lungs, frantically bellowing "hurrahs" to put some heart in their bellies. The work that was being done on board the *Belle Hermine* was none the less murderous in effect for being accomplished in dead silence, as the stern Guénolé ever required. And, finally, the larger of the two Castillian frigates, her masts gone, and totally disabled, cut her cables and drifted onto the reefs guard-

ing the island, where she struck, completing her destruction, while her consort, thus abandoned, judging the battle hopelessly lost, lowered her yellow and red ensign in surrender.

And then it was that the unforeseen occurred.

The lads of the *Belle Hermine* had already put down the long-boat and were pouring onto the deck of the Spaniard, whose gangways were littered with the wounded and the dying. Now custom demands that in like case, every prisoner who is no longer fit for fighting be promptly despatched, so as to reserve all the care available for the victors—and this is no more than just. Thus our Bretons were beginning to clear the decks of such of their enemies as had fallen, throwing the bodies over the barricading. Suddenly, one of the wounded, in the very moment when the knife was about to plunge into his throat, finishing him, escaped from the hands holding him down, and spryly enough ran to throw himself at Thomas's feet.

"*Señor capitán!*" cried he in his jargon, "*No me mateis. Yo os diré la verdad!*"

Now this was, word for word, what the mulatto prisoner had uttered, he who had served as guide at the taking of Ciudad Real. Thomas, remembering it well, and puzzled besides by the word *verdad*, which in French, means "truth," bethought him that there was some mystery in all this, and sought to draw it forth to the light. But though questioned, and clearly enough, the fellow continued to clasp the Corsair's knees, and now, indeed, seemed scarce to breathe, as though in mortal terror of that which he was about to say. A fine big Negro he was, with, for all wound, naught but a musketshot in his right arm—but a mighty trembling shook his every limb.

"*Pardieu!*" said Thomas, ever quick to lose patience, "let the knave be killed at once if he have nothing to say. *Hola!* A pistol this way!"

At this the fellow found his tongue—and what it spoke

made every man's eyes start from his head, for, having first begged for quarter, as the price of the truth he was to reveal, he at once declared—the very moment his prayer was granted—that his name was Mohere, and that he was the public hangman of Panama, sent with the Spanish fleet by decree of none less than the President himself, for never had the latter doubted that the ships he was sending out would be victorious over the Filibusters, and he had commanded that no quarter be given to these "pirates" and that they be, every man of them, hanged, and the Sieur de l'Agnelet higher than all the rest!

Furious, the lads of the crew broke out at this, but Thomas, very calm, though suddenly grown ashy white, bade them be still. Whereupon he looked down at the hangman, still grovelling at his feet.

"I grant you quarter, and even liberty," said he. "But on condition that you take a letter from me to your President, for I desire that he have news of me. You meanwhile take good note of all you see here, that you may give your master a faithful report."

As he spoke he drew his sword, a weapon well-tempered, and marvellous trenchant. His lads, following him with their eyes, saw him walk to the hatch—the Spaniards who were still sound of limb had, as usual, taken refuge in the depths of the hold.

"Every man to the deck!" ordered Thomas.

One of the prisoners, greatly frightened, appeared in the opening and Thomas, with one terrible blow. struck off his head. A second followed the first, and his head also flew through the air. Twenty, forty others came up one by one—for, from below, they could see nothing, and little suspected the welcome awaiting them, so soon as they issued from the hatch—that death-dealing sword, dripping with the blood of their comrades. Tireless, Thomas dealt twenty, and forty strokes. And finally, fifty-three heads had fallen, the last hacked and sawed

off rather than severed clean from the body. With the same cold fury, Thomas still brandished his blade, now blunted, dented, and useless. But the carnage was done. The last prisoner had been slain.

The Corsairs in silence watched the frightful execution. And hardened as they were, and accustomed to the worst butchery, a secret horror turned them pale. Nevertheless, at a sign from their master, without protest they threw all this slaughtered human flesh into the sea. Then one of them, who knew the rudiments, having been trained in the theology, and even, as some claimed, having taken orders as priest and curate, came forward at Thomas's command, to write the letter which the Negro hangman, only surviving member of the captured crew, was to carry to his President. For this writing no one there present, of course, had paper, ink, or pen. But the student trained in theology was by this no whit embarrassed, and it did not take him long to carve a splinter of wood into a stylus, which he then dipped into the blood streaming over the deck; and of a surety no scribe ever had so overflowing an inkwell, nor such fine red ink. As to paper, some of the crew went to search the coffers of the Spanish captain, slain also, as justice demanded. And it was on the very captain's commission of this latter that the student trained in theology indited the letter dictated by Thomas. Now here are the terms of that letter, which the President of Panama later submitted to His Catholic Majesty, "as a horrible proof of the insolence and barbarity of the French pirates," His Catholic Majesty then depositing it in his royal library of the Escorial, where the curious traveller may to this day see this same curious missive.

*We, Thomas, by the grace of God, and his Majesty the King of France, Sieur de l'Agnelet, and in addition, Captain of Filibustery, and Gentleman of Fortune, to the President of Panama, greeting.*

*By these presents we here bring to your knowledge that*

*the fleet by you despatched to the Isle of Vieille Providence for our discomfiture, and in order that we might, to the last man, be slaughtered, contrary to all laws, rules, and customs of just warfare, was itself discomfited and vanquished by us, in loyal combat, as the slave we have set free and that we are now sending back to you with this message can testify.*

*The said slave having confessed to us that he is a hangman in your service, and that as such he embarked on your fleet there to exercise his calling, and villainously to murder and hang by the neck all the Corsairs and Filibusters your fleet might have taken captive, had God given it the victory; all this being done in lieu of treating with the said Corsairs and Filibusters honourably, as becomes Christian enemies; for these reasons, we ourselves, with our own hands and sword have decapitated every Spaniard by us captured and made prisoner on your fleet; and this, in just reprisal, and in accordance with the will of God, who designedly gave us the victory, denying it to you, though your forces were far stronger and more numerous.*

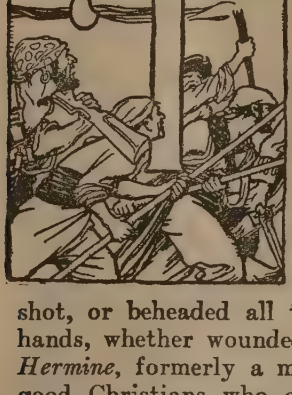
*And, as we have done in this encounter so shall we in all encounters to come, purposing ever to refuse to you any quarter whatsoever, and to slay you all, yourself in person, if God wills, as you purpose to kill us, and as we believe that you would do, if you could. But this shall never be, because not one of us shall ever, alive, fall into your heretic hands.*

*So be it, for such is our pleasure.*

*And this notwithstanding, God with you.*

THOMAS L'AGNELET.

## CHAPTER IV



THUS, from that fateful month of May, 1682, Thomas l'Agnelet became, through the will of his enemies far more than through his own, a Gentleman of Fortune in good sooth, and as such harried said enemies—who forced him so to do—in an evil warfare, instead of in fair fight—that is to say, he never more gave quarter to anyone, whomsoever, and hanged, drowned, shot, or beheaded all the vanquished who fell into his hands, whether wounded or sound. And thus the *Belle Hermine*, formerly a most honest ship, and manned by good Christians who everyone practised so far as he could the virtue of charity, and of forgiveness to one's enemies, speedily became a most devilish vessel, where reigned, as absolute masters, a thousand frightful vices, above all an unequalled ferocity, a ferocity that could never get its fill of blood.

For no pest or pox has contagion like to that veritable fever which burns and devours men caught by the demon of cruelty. To a lad by nature gentle and generous of heart, the habit of crime comes so quickly from daily contact with criminals already hardened that he is never long in finding his own sweetest pleasures in inflicting discomfort and torture on his victims, to the very point of tearing them to pieces with his own hands. And whoever, from the summer of 1682 on, might have observed the crew of Thomas's frigate, a crew still composed for the most part of his St. Malo countrymen, honest lads all,

and born of honest families, towards whom they acted ever as affectionate and respectful sons; whoever, I say, might see them now, become like to the most terrible brigands, or the most savage of wild beasts, would certainly refuse to believe that so diabolical a transformation could be accomplished by any save that grand corruptor and ravisher of souls, Satan himself. . . .

This raging plague, Guénolé alone resisted. Powerless either to give it check, or in any way to soften the horrors, unceasingly renewed, wherein his comrades took delight, powerless also to soften in any wise the heart and will of that same Thomas who still bore him love, and still called him brother, but who never more sought counsel of him, or talked to him in intimacy—Juana ever coming between them—Louis Guénolé locked himself up, so to speak, in his solitary virtue, and lived in the midst of the ferocious horde whose lieutenant, willy-nilly, he still was, as priests and monks live in the world, never removing their pious gaze from the Cross. . . .

He remained now the day long in his cabin, coming out only for the rounds of inspection that he ever rigourously conducted throughout the entire ship, devoting himself to maintaining that strict discipline, at least, without which the sea spells but disaster and shipwreck. But, no sooner this duty accomplished, than Louis Guénolé went back to his quarters, closing tight his cabin door to keep out the eternal din of disputes, quarrelling, blasphemies, wanton talk, and other noisy impieties, which would have distracted him from his very prayers. For, alone in his cabin, Louis Guénolé did nothing now but pray. All day long he prayed, throughout such time, at least, as he was not on watch. And twice during the night he would devoutly rise to chant the vigil and matins at such time as the ship's clock rang eight bells, and four, which in ship's language means midnight, and two of the morning. And all this the better to entreat Our Lord, through the intercession of His Very Holy Mother, and

the Holy Archangels, and the Holy Angels, the Apostles, Martyrs—in short all the saints, great and small—to be clement and merciful toward these Malouins, both captain and crew, thus madly throwing away their souls as food for Him-Who-is-Accursed to batten on. And Louis Guénolé, that these souls might be saved, and also his own, so perillously adventuring in such company, never wearied of reciting his thousand and thousand orisons and paternosters, ofttimes wearing haircloth. and many a time lashing his back in penitence.

And yet, notwithstanding all these devotions, Thomas's lieutenant remained none the less a good lieutenant, and was ever a doughty fighter. None better than he, now as in former days, helped to win victories. But the battle won, he would promptly disappear, fleeing in horror from massacre and carnage, in haste to kneel before his crucifix, imploring its mercy for the executioners as well as for their victims.

In these same hours of gory victory, Juana, on the contrary, who, during the combat had taken delight in promenading, as was her wont, through the thick of bullets and cannon-balls, might be seen taking equal delight in the death agonies of the vanquished, smiling, and with her pointed tongue licking her painted lips, the while waiting victims sobbed or howled in terror.

Then she would come forward, picking her way through the blood and litter of mangled flesh, stepping carefully in her delicate slippers so as not to soil the satin or gilt cloth of which they were fashioned. Drawing near to one dying, she would lean over him the better to enjoy his anguish, sometimes calling for a knife that she might strike him with her own hand; at which Thomas marvelled much, for skilful, and strong she was, and could, when she chose, kill at a blow. But, more often, she took pleasure in dealing less quickly with her victim, and sometimes conceived new tortures, slow, picturesque, and ingenious.

Thus did she to the delight of all, on the occasion when a merchantman from Cadiz, laden with indigo and cochineal, fell into the Corsairs' hands. The merchantman had scarce offered any resistance, but would doubtless have been the source of dangerous gossip, had any of its crew escaped with their lives. At the moment then when this danger was about to be done away with, Juana, suddenly laughing aloud, ordered the Corsairs to push a long plank through the gangway of the merchantman, in the manner of a gangplank that, however, led nowhere, save out over the sea—and then commanded the prisoners to disembark at once—by means of aforesaid plank, on pain of being flayed alive and torn to pieces with burning tongs if they faltered. One alone hesitated, and was promptly tortured in such fashion that the others ran precipitately toward the plank, choosing to drown rather than suffer such fiendish devices. And the drowning that followed was pleasant to see, for these Cadiz folk, knowing how to swim, kept up for a long time before they finally sank; and, as Juana had foreseen, some sharks too came to join the swimmers. . . .

But, a little later, when the fighting and slaughtering were done, and the prizes, duly pillaged, and clean stripped of all equipment, had been set afire and were drifting before the wind into the night, like to great wandering torches, illuminating the sea into which they were soon to vanish—then, intoxicated, drunk with blood, voluptuously excited to the very depths of her throbbing flesh, Juana, suddenly impatient, would withdraw to her cabin, casting toward Thomas a glance that was both an appeal and a command.

And this command, Thomas had never failed to obey.

Towards nightfall of such days as these, the *Belle Hermine*, triumphant, and drunk too with her victory, would make off to the open, where there were no reefs to fear, and there, if the weather were fine, as it usually was in these regions, she would sail on through the night, all

sails reefed, thirty lanterns hoisted to the masts, for fear of boarding, and the helm lashed down, so that no member of the crew need attend to steering, keeping watch, or working the sails. And if perchance any ships passing through these waters caught sight of this prodigious craft suddenly looming out of the dark, or the mist, and flaming with light, a great din of shouts, songs, bursts of laughter, and blasphemies arising therefrom—all the uproar in short made by one hundred and twenty drunken pirates, drinking, gaming, and howling until dawn—then in cold terror they would change their course, sailing large in haste to flee, thinking to have seen the Phantom Ship of the Accursed Hollander, and its accursed crew, to which, as everyone knows, Hell itself refuses a resting place. . . .

## CHAPTER V

LATE in the spring of our year of grace 1683, the filibustering captains Grammont, Van Horn, and Laurent bethought themselves of attacking Vera Cruz—or, to translate its name—"True Cross,"—this town, situated on the Gulf of Mexico, serving as the capital of New Spain, and as such cutting a fine figure among the cities of the New World, for it is built all of freestone, and many are the palaces, mansions, gardens, wide cellars, storehouses, and wharves which it possesses, all stocked with the treasures that rich Spaniards have there carefully stowed away. And of a surety the capture of such a city offered the Filibusters ample compensation for the expedition they had failed to carry out the previous year against Puerto Bello, when the ships of the Adventurers, assembling off the Isle of Vieille Providence to carry out this project, had been dispersed by the Panama fleet, for which dispersion Thomas l'Agnelet had already wrought vengeance, as we have seen by crushing the rear-guard of the ambushed enemy.

Once more a division of spoils was duly signed at the Isle aux Vaches, the Governor of the Tortoise still being minded to discourage the Filibusters from ambitious undertakings. Moreover, having grown finicky of late, he had begun once more rigourously to refuse all commissions, letters of marque, and even—lest a bold use be made of them—mere hunting or fishing permits with which the Adventurers much simplified the matter of purchasing powder, lead, and diverse munitions. Besides,

the project was sufficiently weighty, the garrison at Vera Cruz consisting of four thousand seasoned soldiers, while fifteen thousand infantry and cavalry cantoned in the region round about the city could in less than twelve hours come to its rescue, if need should arise. Wherefore Captain Grammont, the general in command of the expedition, greatly desired the help of all such doughty men as might be of a mind to join him, desiring also, in spite of the numbers involved, to keep the whole plan most rigourously secret.

And thus the chiefs of the Adventurers, holding a council of war before setting sail, were vastly surprised at being interrupted in the very midst of their deliberations by a most unexpected arrival. This was no other than that of the Sieur de Cussi Tarin in person, who, warned, God knows how, of these projects, had promptly left his residence at La Tortue, to come once again to apprise the captains of Filibustery of his total disapproval of this new belligerent enterprise of theirs, and to read to them as regarding such matters the express orders of the King, ever more formally and sternly stated.

With the courtesy and deference habitual to them, the captains heard him out. They were assembled in full number—to wit, the three Grammonts, Van Horn, and Laurent de Graaf, Thomas l'Agnelet, Redbeard, the Dieppois, the Huguenot d'Oléron, and even Mary Rackham, attired, as her wont was, in man's clothes. Of all the brave Corsairs Thomas had known of yore, one alone was lacking, Loredano, who for more than a year had nowhere been seen, nor did any one know, not even Mary Rackham, what had become of this singular personage, ever one of the most mysterious beings in the roster of the Filibusters.

Nevertheless, Monsieur de Cussi Tarin spoke with much force and eloquence. Recalling to his hearers the numerous good offices he had for so many years rendered the Brothers of the Coast, and the ingenuity he had so

long displayed in delaying to enforce obedience to the commands sent out from Paris and Versailles, he went on to explain that things could not continue in this fashion, and that the King, resolving to put an end to a state of things so displeasing to him, and to enforce respect for the treaty established by him and his cousin the King of Spain, had recently determined to pursue the redoubtable policy of sending several of his frigates to the Americas, should persuasion again prove futile, and force necessary.

At this, the captains looked at one another. Not daring to rebel openly, they hesitated to reply, though they were none the less resolved to keep to their project. And, finally, Captain Grammont thought to have found the evasion needed:

"Hé," said he, "monsieur! And how can the King know that we are setting out to the conquest of Vera Cruz, when our brothers and comrades themselves are not all of them informed of it? How, in truth, can that be? I divine, sir, that it is your own goodness of heart, well known to us as it is, which alone inspires you in this, making intolerable to you the thought of the cruelties which, in this event, might be practised on the Spaniards. But, on my faith as a Filibuster, I promise you that there will be no cruelty whatever; for so admirably is our plan conceived that we shall conquer before having set off a single priming, and the Spaniards shall be both pillaged and set to ransom before they are even aware of it. You must admit surely that no one could offer better than this!"

The Filibusters made haste to burst into great roars of laughter. But the Governor maintained his stern demeanour.

"Jesting aside"—he began again, coldly—"the King condemns both privateering and conquest. Peace is peace. Such is his pleasure. But to those who venture beyond his desires, the cost may prove dear. And this you should know!"

At once the captains grew cautiously silent. Even Grammont, though clever enough at speech and quick at replying, was at a loss. For, to speak plain, the King's pleasure is not an argument easy to refute. In the pause that followed—the time it takes to load a musket—Monsieur de Cussi Tarin thought to have won the battle.

But then Thomas l'Agnelet rose to speak. And every man there looked at him with surprise, for Thomas l'Agnelet spoke little if at all, save on the most extraordinary of occasions. And for a year now, besides, his mood, never very gay or expansive, had grown singularly sombre. He alone, of all those assembled in counsel, had not yet spoken a word.

None the less he spoke now, in his gruff, somewhat hoarse voice. And to none did it occur to check him, for his renown was by this time so great that not a single one of the Filibusters present would have presumed in any wise to exercise any authority over him.

"The King," said he, "once deigned to receive me in person at his château at St. Germain, and there loaded me with favours. For that I hereby declare myself his most faithful subject, and from my heart desire but to die in his service. And it is as a signal and battle-stained proof of my loyalty that I desire as soon as may be to plant his flag on the city of Vera Cruz, which of a surety should be French, and not Spanish, since so great a King was certainly born to be master over all regions."

Delighted with this answer, no less handsome than ingenious, the assembly as one man broke into sounding applause, the Sieur de Cussi alone not adding his approbation to that of the rest. He contented himself with turning towards Thomas, contemplating him curiously, after first saluting him with a wave of the hand. Nothing more. But thereupon he produced his final argument, addressing it to Filibustery itself, and showing plainly his desire not to prolong further a useless debate.

"Gentlemen," said he, "it is not my purpose to argue

with you. It suffices that I have acquainted you with His Majesty's will in this matter. Let us, therefore, break off at this point. But suffer me once more to appeal to your reason, and to implore you to return to the path of duty. I now clearly perceive His Majesty's anger poising above your heads. And as you know lightning itself is not more prompt to strike, or less devastating. Gentlemen, I bid you adieu."

He raised his hat to his head and retired, leaving his hearers more than ever confirmed in their intentions, albeit somewhat disturbed by his threats. But, as they eyed one another after Monsieur de Cussi's departure, Thomas, without much reflection, and prompted by impulse rather than judgment, uttered three loud "*Vive le Rois!*" at once adding thereto another cry no less resounding—"En avant! A la Vera Cruz!" And these cries, thus mingled, so effectively reassured the company—though none could have explained why this should be—that on the very evening of this day, the wind being fair, every captain there present hoisted sail, and set his helm hard on that Cape Catoche, which must be rounded to reach Vera Cruz. . . .

And seven days later they were the masters of the city, occupied, as Captain Grammont had so obligingly promised the Sieur de Cussi Tarin, almost without striking a blow. Nothing but the capture of the fort had required the slightest effort, and that had cost them but seven Adventurers killed and eleven wounded. An unbelievable success in short, to be credited in the first place to the general who had wisely assembled under one flag so many brave and skilful captains—a greater number of them, indeed, than had ever before at one time signed a division of spoils; but credit was also due, and in even larger measure perhaps, to Thomas l'Agnelet, whose wide experience, acquired in the most diverse regions, and especially at Ciudad Real de Nueva Granada, had proved of the

utmost value in planning the attack, and who, in addition, so soon as the time for fighting rather than deliberating arrived, had fought in such wise, and, not to mince words, so recklessly, that in good sooth it seemed he was more intent on winning death than victory.

## CHAPTER VI

VERA CRUZ captured and pillaged, the Filibusters beat a hasty retreat, for their booty was large and it behooved them to put it in a safe place. Now, the lookouts on the ships were already signalling the arrival of a Spanish fleet consisting of seventeen men-of-war, all of a greater size than the Filibusters' ships, which numbered but eight, of which three were mere fishing smacks, and carried no guns.

Nevertheless, these same ships and fishing smacks passed through the very midst of the Spanish fleet, and yet were not attacked, although the Admiral of this fleet could scarcely have failed to see, heaped on the Adventurers' decks, all the gold, silver, and other precious wares they had won by pillage. But from the masts of these same Adventurers flew and snapped in the breeze the terrible white flag—that is, the flag of Filibustery as well as the flag of France, and still other redoubtable signs and emblems, such as the ermine-bearing standard of St. Malo, and a certain blood-red banner in the middle of which a golden lamb could be descried lolling at ease. And however doughty they might be, the Castillians had no great inclination to give battle to these flags, with which victory was now too confirmed a habit.

And thus the adventurous squadron returned without let or hindrance to the anchorage of that Isle aux Vaches from which they had but a few days before set sail. The

booty was there divided full justly. Whereupon, without wasting so much as a single day, every lad to share therein right joyfully began to squander his winnings on drinking, feasting, and whoring. It is from this time on as a matter of fact that the Isle aux Vaches, though inferior in all respects to the Tortoise, began to be plentifully supplied with pot-houses and bawds, and there could one buy all such objects as sailors and soldiers fancy in the way of gay apparel and every manner of finery, jewellry and other costly gewgaws. And needless to say the merchants dealt high-handedly with these customers and many a piece of bad satin that in France might be bought for a crown was brazenly sold at the Isle aux Vaches for more ringing louis d'or than you could count on your fingers. In this wise did these traders wax rich much faster and at less cost in these isles of the West Indies than the Corsairs themselves; which caused the aforesaid Corsairs no little vexation. And never did a year go by, good or ill, that three or four of these merchants did not get their skulls broken or their guts ripped out.

From the time of their arrival at the Isle aux Vaches then, the Filibusters began their festivities, of which plenty were needed in sooth, to celebrate so valiant a deed of arms. For fifteen nights without missing so much as one night of the lot, they feasted and caroused. Whereupon, jaded with indigestion, and spent with debauchery, the conquerors of Vera Cruz looked as sallow and hollow-eyed as any poor devil dying of hunger.

Nor had the leaders, any more than the humblest of their followers, abstained from these gross festivities, so true is it that Adventurers are "brothers" as indeed they call themselves—like to one another as peas, with the same tastes and feelings as regards almost everything. The most illustrious captains of the Filibustering fleet could be seen mingling with the lowest sailors of their crews even in the most disreputable taverns and bawdy

houses, sitting quite unashamed at the same tables, drinking the same raw rum, fondling the same wenches. There did Grammont and Laurent de Graaf meet together, and promptly it came into Juana's head to have Thomas take her also to these meeting-places.

For she took singular pleasure in the coarsest kinds of merrymaking, nor could the vilest of low debauchery offend her; and it seemed that she found endless delight in queening it over a people of uproarious drunkards, and lecherous tipsters hot with rut. And above all did it afford her a secret and sensual delight to feel rising and seething around her the floods of passion and desire her now full-blossoming beauty ever more hotly exasperated. Nor had arguments and quarrels any terrors for her; and few things did she like better than the crimson of fresh-spilled blood. Indeed, she even took a hand in spilling some herself—and this time, not as was her wont, on the deck of captured prizes in the evening following the battle. . . .

Strangely enough did this come about, amid circumstances which it ever thereafter caused Thomas anguish and shame to recall. . . .

The capture of Vera Cruz had been accompanied by a most unexpected event, that contributed greatly to the final success of the Filibusters. For while they were preparing to assault the fortress, the cannonade they had maintained for twelve hours having proved fruitless, they were suddenly struck dumb with amazement at seeing the Castillian flag come tumbling down, and the French emblem run up in its stead. Fearing a trap, the Adventurers advanced with utmost caution. But at the drawbridge they were accosted by one the mere sight of whom dispelled their suspicions, and filled them with rejoicing beside; for it was none other than their former comrade Loredano of whom no news had reached them for more than a year, and who thus, with no little glory, be it said, returned once more to the bosom of Filibustering. A

private matter, so he explained—when the time for explanations arrived—had constrained him to spend the entire year at Vera Cruz, and there play the part of a peaceable burgher; but no sooner had he, at the first shot, recognized his Coast Brothers as the assailants of the ramparts, than, in a twinkling, and in despite of all the burghers in the world, he had promptly been transformed into a Coast Brother also; slipping into the citadel—and much to the purpose it was too that he did so—he had there thrown down his mask, leaping suddenly, sword in hand, into the very midst of the garrison, and throwing it into such a panic that it had at once taken to its heels, and with loud cries of "treason!" sought refuge in the rifle-pits. And thus had Loredano, singlehanded, conquered and delivered over to Filibustery the fortress and its forty cannon. Whence he derived much glory and a fat share of the booty.

And now this same Loredano, returning thereupon to the Isle aux Vaches, with the other Adventurers—and, as it chanced, it was on the *Belle Hermine* he had chosen to take passage rather than on the *Flying King*—was also lingering in the aforesaid isle, there disporting himself right joyously. Juana, who had observed him much during the crossing, was now contriving to be often with him—Thomas ever accompanying her—in one of the better resorts of the town; and then indeed did wine, rum, and revelry flow free as rivers in springtime. And the Venetian—a handsome fellow, as gallant as he was brave—never failed to arouse in Juana a joyous mood. Right merrily did her laughter ring out at all his sallies—whereat Thomas, with never an evil thought in his head, rejoiced also. . . .

But the day came when, in his own despite, this joy of his came to a sudden end. It was at the Sign of the Grey Parrot that they were drinking and carousing on that fateful day, the three of them, Thomas, Loredano, and

Thomas's smiling mistress. And while they were thus disporting themselves in all amity, others of the merry crew came in also in search of diversion. Among these were Captain Grammont, Edward Bonny and Mary Rackham. At first all progressed as well as might be, the entire company soon growing more than half tipsy, and with the utmost friendliness. But alas! No sooner were they completely drunk, than the two women grew quarrelsome —as so often happens. And the quarrel promptly grew venomous, the poison therefor flowing in from many a secret source—but more particularly because Rackham, her head turned somewhat by the male attire she wore, had the presumption to imply that her adversary was but a mere female, and what with the paint she laid so thick on each cheek up to her very nose, and the fine brocade wherewith she covered her buttocks, was but a strumpet after all, gotten up for her trade. Now Juana was ready enough with a retort that, as to strumpets, a woman who staid at home under the protection of her lover—and one lover, be it noted—was certainly worth as much as any trollope who ran around in men's clothes, taking them off too for every man she met, and freely using every corner of the battlefield for her whoring.

"Thrice damned bitch!" thereupon howled Mary Rackham, "you lie like the drab and slut you are!"

Both women sprang to their feet with a violence that knocked over the benches. Face to face they spat defiance, their mouths twisted and frothing with the insults they hurled at one another. Vainly did Thomas, Redbeard, Loredano, and Grammont together seek to appease them. Sobered now by the very excess of their fury, they both clamoured obstinately for the right, recognized by all Coast Brothers, to settle their quarrel as they chose without any intervention whatsoever.

"*Par les tripes de Dieu!*" swore the woman Adventurer, her knife already bared, "cast off, or I'll rip the guts out

of you! Captain Thomas l'Agnelet, I love you too well to flay your wench alive. Have no fear! But leave my mark on her buttocks I will, to stop her cackling!"

Juana, her little sharp teeth biting her lower lip to the very blood, had also drawn her knife—a Spanish dagger, gold-handled, that she always wore in her belt, more as an ornament than as a weapon. She was silent now, her black eyes flaming—as sunlight flames reflected from the molten tar of a caulking cauldron. And the four men, thus unwillingly witnessing the duel, saw her crouching, each muscle tense, like a Peruvian jaguar, ready to spring. . . .

A strange spectacle indeed, that of these duellists, the one in breeches, the other in a dress with a train. And in their persons they differed as widely as in their dress, the Spanish girl, slim and delicately fashioned, her blue-glinting black hair superbly dressed in a towering structure that added a foot at least to her stature—and the English maid, strong enough to twist the heaviest gold piece like so much lead between her fingers, her thick yellow hair flowing free over shoulders as broad as those of a man. The odds in all surety were by no means even between this robust fighting maid and this frail damsel. And Thomas l'Agnelet, seeing that it was so, once more sought to interpose. But this time Grammont dissuaded him, and full wisely.

"Don't you see," said he, "that if you check them today, they will fight all the more desperately to-morrow? Better let them have it out in hot blood rather than cold!"

Others of the roisterers, drawing near from all corners of the tavern, had already formed a circle around the challengers, with cries of "Fair Play!"—meaning that the law of the Filibusters was to be observed, and the adversaries were to be allowed to fight howsoever they wished, without succour from anyone, save such help as might be needed, after blows had been exchanged, to pick up the vanquished.

"Clear decks!" cried Mary Rackham, taking three steps backward to gain space for a rush on her adversary.

And promptly she sprang at Juana, threatening the latter's face with her bare poignard, and with her other hand endeavouring to grasp her, so as to throw her down. For, as she had assured Thomas, she wanted merely to set her mark on her rival, not to kill her—rivals they were in good sooth, as was made clear in the instant that followed.

Juana, with her left hand gathering up the folds of her train so as not to trip therein, had but a single hand free to fight with. Leaping to one side to escape the dagger point threatening her eyes, she retorted with a slanting thrust, that ripped the woman Filibuster's arm open from elbow to wrist. Stunned, and immediately thereupon maddened with pain, Mary Rackham uttered a cry so piercing that many of the spectators, at hearing it, thought she must have received a mortal wound. But straightway she sprang upon Juana, with three such ferocious lunges that the girl escaped them only by giving way by at least six paces, and with not even an attempt to conceal her retreat.

"Stop where you stand!" howled the Filibusteress, again charging with out-thrust poignard, "stop, I say, you chicken-livered bawd, you man-stealer, and come here till I gut you! Come till I clean out your belly for you before you bloat with the spawn of that ruffian Venetian you've taken from me. . . ."

And she was in a fair way to say more besides; already the three men, Thomas, Redbeard, and Loredano were eyeing one another with scowling brows. But Juana, savage with fury now in her turn, closed her mouth for her in a sudden frantic grapple.

And by this treacherous abuse were these savage rivals all of a sudden thrown into an embrace as close as that of the most frenzied lovers. Each now had grasped the other by the hair, and the two poignard blades, athirst

for blood, ground their steel one against the other, while from Mary Rackham's torn arm, a crimson rain fell upon the closely writhing bodies. The embrace, however, could not last. Too weak by half, Juana suddenly crumpled like a reed crushed in the hand, and fell backwards, dragging Mary with her. And this time neither one uttered a cry but lay on the floor and everyone thought them both slain outright. But when the couple, still closely intertwined and mingled, were picked up, it was revealed that only Mary Rackham was actually dead, the Spanish dagger having pierced clean through her left breast a little below the very centre. As to Juana, she had but fainted, stunned by the force with which her head had struck the tiles of the floor. Indeed, she was not even wounded, for the dagger of the vanquished Filibusteress had no more than scratched the victor.

When, after a lapse of time, she regained consciousness, she found Thomas leaning over her. The tavern was empty now, for everyone had left, Redbeard and Loredano among the first.

With brooding, sombre eyes Thomas was looking fixedly at Juana. Making a brusque effort she sat up, and gave a rapid glance around her. Then she questioned him.

"Dead?" There was hate still in her voice.

"Yes," said Thomas.

She looked at him then, and saw his eyes. And she remembered. In a great surge the blood mounted to her cheeks, her forehead, her breast even. Her muscles suddenly tense, she sprang to her feet.

"You didn't believe?" she cried.

But he answered not a word; and slowly, heavily, he turned away his head. Her flush deepened yet more, and for three whole seconds she hesitated. Then, abruptly breaking into a loud laugh, she touched him with her finger. Imperious and disdainful she commanded him:

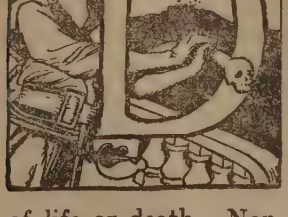
"Pick up my dagger!"

He picked it up. Lightly she ran her tongue along the still dripping steel, and tasted of the blood, with a grimace delicately greedy. Then, sheathing her knife, she moved towards the door.

"*Ça!*" said she. "Let's go aboard. I'm tired. Come!"

She walked on without so much as turning her head. And he followed her.

## CHAPTER VII



DURING the weeks that followed, Thomas l'Agnelet remained on board ship, brooding in his cabin like a wounded wild boar in his lair. No one for the nonce laid eyes on him, man or woman, friend or enemy, not even the crew, not even Louis Guénolé. Not for two whole months did the latter, friend and brother as he was to Captain Thomas, win from him any sign whether of life or death. Nor did news from without penetrate into the captain's cabin, tight-walled as a trap-dungeon. Thus Thomas knew naught of the duel Redbeard had fought, in Filibuster fashion, with Loredano—a duel in which a shot from the Venetian's musket had passed clean through the Englishman, not killing him, however, for so strong is the current of life in men of this ilk, that full easily do they bear lead, iron, and steel, digesting bullets and shots as though they were so many apples or plums. But Thomas fought no duel. Doubtless, he never once thought of it.

And so, like a savage on a desert isle, he lived alone with Juana, whom he forced to live in like fashion. Not once during this time did she see any living creature save the three mulatto slaves. And the number even of these was diminished, Thomas in a moment of fury having slain one of them. And pointblank he refused to purchase another. "Two such procuresses quite sufficed—indeed, were already too many."

Not once during those eight weeks did the *Belle Her-*

*mine* weigh anchor from the Isle aux Vaches, whether for cruise or chase. And Louis, ever praying to God for the salvation of all on board, knew not whether to rejoice at so long a truce in the bloodthirsty doings that had gone before, or whether to tremble the more for what the future might bring, for what Thomas's brooding solitude might be preparing. For from that solitude Thomas was bound to issue, sooner or later, a Thomas more terrible, more implacable than ever.

And thus, indeed, did it happen, just as Louis Guénolé had foreseen. On a certain evening in September—only the calendar could have told what season it was, for all months are in the American Indies equally torrid and fair—the crew were as usual at their gaming and drinking, when to their utter amazement the captain's voice rang out all of a sudden—and that voice few who heard it ever failed to obey. Imperiously, and with a strange and feverish haste, Thomas was giving orders for at once getting under sail. As he thundered out his commands, the anchor came up, the ropes were let run, the sails gathered and hoisted, the yards braced, and the *Belle Hermine* was under way. Three days later, crossing from Cayas to Doce Leguas, she ran into a three-master from Ostend, on her way from Cartagena, bound for Europe. Promptly, Thomas attacked and captured her, and with his own hand put to the sword every man there who was a native of Ostend, for one of their number—fifteen of them there were—had fired his pistol before surrendering. . . .

And on the evening of that day, the crew, singing their songs on the deck in the moonlight, once more beheld their captain and his love reconciled, doubtless—if, indeed, they had quarrelled, for as to this no one had any knowledge—leaning side by side on the taffrail, and side by side gazing at the sea. So closely did their bodies press one against the other that they seemed indeed but one. . . .

The *Belle Hermine* took up her wanderings again—that was life in the open, if ever such there was in sooth! A fit life for free men, for Filibusters, Knights of the Sea, Gentlemen of Fortune. . . .

And as before, the real captain was Juana, the réal lieutenant Thomas—with this difference, however, that the lieutenant now was less docile than formerly, and at times downright rebellious. . . .

In other respects, he was the same Thomas, save that he spoke more briefly still, and in a voice more hoarse than ever; and the only words he uttered were words of command. Never did he pause now to chat with Louis Guénolé in the friendly familiarity of yore. Twice, or thrice, perhaps, passing close to his lieutenant, as though by chance, he put a hand on his shoulder. That was all. And very early one day, as he came out of his cabin to breathe in the fresh morning breeze—the lads of the crew spoke of it thereafter among themselves, so much did what happened surprise them—he stepped to the helm where Guénolé stood inspecting the binnacle; and with a brusque gesture he put his arms around him, kissing him on the cheek three and four times, and during this embrace,

"Oh, brother Louis," he repeated, again and again, "Oh, brother Louis!"

But never was like scene witnessed again.

Nevertheless, forced now and then to replenish her supplies, and take on water, the *Belle Hermine* could not altogether avoid putting into port now and again. Several times she dropped anchor in those estuaries of the coast where, under the shelter of the great mahogany trees of the Americas, a ship may easily be concealed, hull, mast, and bowsprit, safe from all hostile eyes. Round about lived Indian tribes, the avowed enemies of Spain, and hence most friendly to these Adventurers and Gentlemen of the Sea. And gladly they brought all manner of victuals, game, fish, and fruits, and allowed their visitors to fill

their leather bottles, barrels, and casks at the watering-places. A ship needs many things, however, which are not to be found among savages—sails, ropes, all manner of rigging, spare parts, salt meat, dried vegetables, to say nothing of bullets, small-shot, langrage, and gunpowder. So that finally Thomas—without any great anxiety on that account—was forced to make for civilized regions. But few there were left now that would welcome Corsairs and Filibusters, and fewer still where Gentlemen of Fortune would not be received with a cannon-shot, so vile was their reputation—justly earned also—among all peace-loving dullards. The *Belle Hermine*, therefore, returned once more to the Tortoise, her only safe refuge. Thirteen weeks to the very day it was, since Mary Rackham had died there, slain by Juana, when the frigate cast anchor in the roads.

The Adventurer captains who had taken part in the expedition to Vera Cruz chanced to be at the Tortoise at the time, some for the reason that, already impoverished by their carousings, they had come in search of other enterprises whereby to win more booty, and others because, with gold still burning their pockets, the Isle aux Vaches had soon seemed to them a dreary resort, and they were minded to spend their last florins with a flourish under the very nose of that same Governor Cussi Tarin who had tried so hard to dissuade them from attacking Vera Cruz. So it came about that when Thomas with his own hand steered to his anchorage between the great tower and the western battery, he saw likewise riding at anchor round about him the whole Filibustering fleet which had sailed away as the *Belle Hermine's* consorts some four months before.

Ashore, nothing had changed. The same folk were drinking at the same taverns, singing the same ribald songs, and swearing the same blasphemous oaths. The talk was ever of prizes, privateering parties, and divisions

of booty. In short, everything was the same. And no one now gave a thought to the formal threats so distinctly stated, with which the Seigneur de Cussi had presented himself in the Isle aux Vaches, any more than to the frigates the King claimed to have sent against the Filibusters. The only changes consisted in some new arrivals, Coast Brothers and Adventurers newly recruited, and in some empty places in the old company of the Filibusters. But this was the usual and inevitable work of cannon and musket, and of boarding parties. Of it no one took the slightest heed. Already Mary Rackham was buried far deeper in the memories of her comrades than in the earth that covered her. Thomas, on landing at the island, found Redbeard and Loredano completely reconciled, and, in fact, very friendly the one toward the other. Redbeard was fully three-fourths cured of his wound, and already he could barely have told you when, how, and on account of whom he had come by it.

To these heedless folk then, living from day to day, unwilling and unable to remember yesterday, unwilling and unable to give a thought to to-morrow, Thomas and Juana returned together. And Juana, as before, prevailed upon her lover to take her to all the most boisterous taverns, and as before, though she was more beautiful now than ever she had been, queened it over the most drunken orgies. And Thomas, submissive, followed where she would, and drank with her. Those who found them sitting together over their wine cups marvelled at times at finding him ever obstinately taciturn, never taking part in jest or song. But, on reflecting that he had never shown himself very talkative, they ceased to wonder. And besides, he never failed of civility or courtesy, and ever gave the comrades kind welcome, though often enough it seemed that he but dimly remembered them at all.

## CHAPTER VIII

THE King's frigates had been announced full many a time without, for that, growing visible. One fine day, nevertheless, they did actually arrive.

On one of those fragrant West Indian nights so lit with stars that navigation becomes easier even than in the full light of day, the royal squadron steered into the channel separating the Tortoise from San Domingo. And there the rising sun discovered it, at its post, broadside toward the harbor, in a long line and accurately spaced, as befits men-of-war. When Thomas jumped out of bed that morning, he caught sight of them through his port-hole. Five ships they numbered in all, the largest carrying forty cannon, the smallest fourteen, their united broadsides covering both roadstead and harbour from end to end. Astern, they flew the emblem of France, white satin wrought with the Fleur-de-Lys, and from their mainmasts fluttered the royal standard, the King's escutcheon in azure and gold.

Spy-glass in hand, Thomas was studying this kingly banner thus unexpectedly presented anew to his gaze, and unfolding on the American breeze just as formerly he had seen it flying from the turret of the King's château at St. Germain, when, of a sudden, from the Admiral's frigate a long-boat, with fourteen sailors at the oars, made off and steered straight for shore. At the helm stood one of the King's officers. In front of him, in the poop-cabin, sat two personages in towering perukes,

nobles of some importance it seemed, from their appearance and the manner in which they reclined at ease on the crimson cushions. As the embarkation was passing within fifty yards of the *Belle Hermine*, one of the bewigged personages rose the better to view the Corsair; then, sitting down again, he made a gesture of the hand, and said something which Thomas, at that distance, could not hear.

Now these personages, it was learned that very afternoon, were nothing less than His Majesty's Commissioners, Messieurs de Saint Laurent and Begon, who had been sent out to reform all abuses practised in the French West Indies, whether at Tortuga, St. Christopher or San Domingo. This was the beginning then of the carrying out of those measures so ominously foretold by Governor Cussi. For, among the abuses which these gentlemen had come to eradicate, the chief one was incontestably the Filibustering custom of confounding peace with war, and persistently making the same use of peacetime as is habitually made of wartime, attacking and holding for ransom all manner of enemies or folk the Filibustering chiefs pretended were such. It could scarcely be doubted, indeed, that the King's Commissioners were thoroughly amazed and indignant at such a state of things, and determined promptly to put an end to it.

Wherefore, on the very day following this deplorable arrival of the Royal frigates, a council of war was held on the *Belle Hermine*, as had many a time befallen in the past. And to it came the fine flower of Filibustery—to wit, Edward Bonny, his friend Loredano, the Adventurer from Dieppe, d'Oléron the Huguenot, several English Adventurers of mark, and a Frenchman of great reputation, de Grognier by name. For Thomas l'Agnelet every one of them had the greatest respect, esteeming him one of the bravest as well as the most frequently successful members of the brotherhood. They wished, therefore, to take counsel with him, and discuss together the course

they were now to pursue. Should they yield with resignation, or should they refuse to yield?

Thomas received them with due honour, bidding them seat themselves around the table in the main cabin, and placing in front of them his most enormous wine jugs, brimming with his best wine. Then he went to fetch Juana that she might take part in the deliberations. Nor did anyone see aught amiss in his so doing, for everyone deemed her of the rank and quality of a true Filibuster, especially since the occasion when she had been seen to handle her dagger with redoubtable skill.

When the first tankards had been drained, that each throat there might be properly cleared and ready for speech, Redbeard opened the deliberations by describing in clear fashion the situation in which Filibustery at that moment found itself—a situation most unpleasant to contemplate, nobody could deny. For the Commissioners, no sooner landed, had sought speech with the Seigneur Cussi Tarin, and for two hours by the clock, had discoursed with him that he might thoroughly be apprised of His Majesty's displeasure, and the resolve entered into by His Majesty to make an end, at whatever cost, of all Filibustering and Filibusters. This had been made known by the Governor himself, who had given a detailed account of the interview to numerous persons, and notably, to several Adventurers, all with the evident purpose of allowing no one to be in ignorance of what had occurred, nor indeed of the smallest detail thereof. Besides, it was not the intention of the royal Commissioners to inquire into past happenings, or to bring charges against any Corsair for privateering expeditions in the past, even though the ambassadors of all Europe had besieged the King's ears with their complaints relative to such expeditions and Corsairs. But if, on the one hand, His Majesty deigned to take account of the services formerly rendered the State by these same Filibusters, and to par-

don their recent acts, and even the crimes committed up to this time, he all the more strictly enjoined that merciless severity be employed toward all such as should dare to persevere in their disregard of royal orders.

"And this blackguard of a King," concluded Redbeard, striking his fist on the table, "this blackguard of a King presumes to think that he is going to force us to surrender at a moment's notice, and to disembark from our ships, and most humbly solicit the Sieur Cussi to be kind enough to treat us each according to our desserts, and distribute among us lands which we shall henceforth have license to plough and cultivate, like the most peaceable of farmers!"

Having said his say, he ceased, and at a gulp drained his glass that held nigh two pints. And little enough that was to afford him some slight relief for the attack of indignation that had nigh choked him as he forced his lips to utter the very word "farmer."

Every one of the captains there was protesting besides, Thomas included, some with loud outbursts of disdainful laughter, others with exclamations of anger. Suddenly, the Huguenot Adventurer d'Oléron, who had been conferring in low tones with several of the English, cried out in a thunderous voice that, as for him, he refused to submit to the King's orders, and furthermore, renounced his nationality, no longer desiring to be numbered among the subjects—slaves, better say—of so infamous a monarch—an idolatrous, despotic tyrant, in short—and anyway his frigates weren't so powerful or numerous as to prevent seven or eight hundred Coast Brothers from making quick work of capturing the whole squadron at a stroke by boarding them simultaneously.

A silence followed, for the Huguenot's proposal was audacious enough. The English captains, however, were already wagging their heads in sign of approval, when Thomas l'Agnelet rose to take the floor, his glass shiver-

ing to fragments under the sudden pressure of his tense fingers.

"By the Christ of the Ravelin," he swore, in all solemnity, "a Frenchman I am, and a Frenchman I remain, a faithful subject of my King, therefore, whatever he may do! As to the blackguards who have presumed, in my presence, to talk of attacking his frigates, and of raising a hand against his flag, these blackguards, I say, though they were Filibusters and Coast Brothers four times over, will find me in their path, sword in fist, if need arises!"

The mulatto slave-women, Juana's servants, who were attending to the wants of the guests, setting tankard after tankard before them on the table, made haste to bring their master another brimming goblet.

Grasping it, he drained the glass at a gulp. Then, facing the company, he cried out with all his lungs,

"*Vive le roi!*"

And to this no one thereupon ventured the slightest objection.

Having thus proclaimed his loyalty, Thomas l'Agnelet sat down once more without another word, seemingly plunged in one of those strange gloomy reveries now so frequent with him. The Dieppois, meanwhile, who had served Thomas as chorus, likewise crying, "*Vive le roi!*" and with right good heart, judging that some gloss on the speech just heard was now in order, propounded a question that was not without its logic.

"Thus, Thomas l'Agnelet, you are now willing and content to bow to the commands of King Louis, and, in obedience to his orders, to disarm your *Belle Hermine?*"

"What? Disarm? Not I!" replied Thomas, thunderstruck, as though just tumbling to earth from the moon.

Recovering himself, he pondered awhile, seemingly. Then, with a look at Juana as though taking counsel of her, he proclaimed that, on the contrary, he was fully

resolved not to obey but, most respectfully, to resist every order conceivable, past, present, or future, and that he would ever act as he was minded, true subject of the King as he was, and hence loyal and faithful, but a frankly declared Gentleman of Fortune likewise, and hence, a free man.

"Free!" repeated Juana calmly, to stress the word.

She had not until this point opened her lips. And all the Filibusters gazed at her with ardent desire, for truly she seemed of a surpassing beauty, richly dressed as a queen, powdered and rouged, with guileful patches to enhance the brilliance of eye and cheek. Resting her chin on a hand dazzling with gems, she listened none the less attentively to every proposal advanced, listened, indeed, more like a general or admiral than like a woman; and her features, delicate though they were, and voluptuous to excess, now wore an expression still more wilful and pensive than their wont.

Captain Grognier it was who now took a turn at propounding his views; and what he had to say was well worth hearing.

"French I am, and French I remain, like you, comrade," he began, addressing himself to Thomas l'Agnelet. "And, being French, I am by that fact a loyal subject of the King of France. How else? Wherefore, I am not for rebellion, all the less so since such rebellion must sooner or later prove fatal to us all. But don't we know full well that this unlucky peace, now so troublesome and irksome to us all, cannot fail to give place full soon to war? Our King Louis the Great is in truth a great King, and I give him but three years or at most four to attack his enemies once again—and his enemies are ours. When that time comes—God give it speed!—those of us who have known how to be patient and how to avoid compromising our fortunes will find ourselves better off than I have words to say! Four years then lie before us, but

four years during which to provide a living in some fashion. Now, to provide this living, there is no need—take my word for it!—of our becoming farmers. Another course is offered to us, and I am sure it is a good one."

He paused, surveying his attentive listeners. And Juana, her curiosity, like that of all women, more readily aroused, inquired:

"What course is that?"

"It is this," declared Grognier, ceasing thereupon to hover about the honey jar, and coming to the point, in gallant haste to satisfy the lady. "Brothers of the Coast, we all of us, as many as are here gathered, know that there is, beyond Puerto Bello, and in that region lying on the other side of Panama, an immense ocean, limitless in fact, known to us as the 'Mer du Sud,' an ocean which bathes, not only the kingdoms of Mexico and Peru, already known to be of a prodigious wealth, but other American provinces also, and no less opulent, virgin lands even now, lands fabulously rich, and no less rich in reality, to which very justly is given the name of Eldorado, for the reason that it produces gold in such abundance that even the household utensils and tools of its meanest inhabitants are made all of this metal. Yes! dishes of gold, gold jars, gold kettles in the kitchen, gold picks and pickaxes, gold axes and scythes, gold ploughs mayhap, all, all of gold, fine gold, gold native to the soil, gold pure of all alloy. And this is not a legend, but a proven fact. And now, my Coast Brothers, listen to me. This southern ocean, whose waters bathe the golden shores of Eldorado, has always been claimed by the Spanish King as his private possession; in the treaties—those very treaties of peace that the French King makes such a point of observing—it is even called the 'Spanish' or 'Castillian' sea, and its waters expressly reserved to these ships alone which fly the red and yellow flag. No fear then that the frigates of the Fleur-de-Lys will ever venture into these waters, thus strictly forbidden them! No fear that King

Louis, or his Commissioners, or his Governors will ever take it upon themselves to be concerned about the enterprises we shall engage in there, we who, a little while from now, if you give ear to my advice, will all of us affix our signature to a division of spoils as advantageous as it is glorious, and by means of which we shall be transformed from mere Filibusters into Conquerors of Gold!"

He rose. With his right hand he smote the table. Glasses were shattered, and the table streamed with wine. And this the wiseacres of the brotherhood interpreted as of good omen.

Straightway, there was high tumult. In wild enthusiasm some of the captains loudly clamoured for ink, pen, and paper, that the compact might at once be drawn up. Among these was the Dieppois, making as much turmoil as any other four. Some of the Brothers meanwhile, less quick with their signatures, were crying out for further details of the project—what of the courses, winds, seasons? One of the English observed, judiciously enough, that to his knowledge there was no way of sailing from the Northern Ocean where they then were into that Southern Ocean to which they proposed to go. But for all these objections Captain Grognier had ready answers, answers which to all appearance were as good as anyone could desire.

"Those of us," said he, "who have a solid deck under our feet"—and by that he meant a deck such as only ships of some size would have—"a deck like this one of l'Agnelet's, for instance," he continued, "can venture round the southern cape, beyond Capes Orange, and San-Roque, in search of Strait Magellan somewhere in latitude 50, thence northward, along the Chilian coast. And here and now, I engage you every one to meet under the very walls of Panama, in April or May of the coming year. As to those of us who are not so fortunate—and of this number am I—those of us, in short, who, by way of ships

and frigates, have naught but old tubs and sieves, we would do well to be rid of them, and travel afoot southwards. Afoot, *oui-da!* sword on flank, and musket on shoulder. And later, the squadrons of the two Viceroys will provide us, and justly enough, with new ships, fresh from the hands of His Catholic Majesty's carpenters."

Someone was applauding the future general; Loredano it was, who up to this time had not uttered a word. But at this point his knowledge of the Americas lent special authority to what he had to say.

"From the northern to the southern sea," he began, "is at the very least twelve Spanish leagues—fifteen by French reckoning—thirty-five marine miles in short. Not much, one might say. None the less, every one of those leagues bristles with obstacles, rivers too deep to ford, impenetrable forest, steep mountains, and above all the Indian "Bravi"—as the Spanish call those Indians they have not been able to subdue. Dangerously skilful are these Indians, too, with their poisoned arrows, letting them fly from a great distance, and with deadly aim. As to the other course—by that I mean the one by sea—I have travelled that way too; and it is, as a matter of fact, difficult only at the approach to the strait, where the winds are invariably contrary, and often as strong as hurricanes."

"But tell us then, brother," said Captain Grognier, when he had heard Loredano out, "which of these courses would you yourself take to get to the Southern Ocean?"

With a slow gesture the Venetian held up both hands, wide open, then let them fall.

"Which I would take?" he asked. "*Las!* the South is far away, and old as I am, it is impossible for me to leave this Northern Ocean whereon I have spent my youth."

He smiled, and those who heard him thus speaking of his years understood clearly enough that it was but in

jest; for he was scarcely more than thirty and there was as yet no touch of white in his jet black hair. But, ever mysterious in his goings and comings, it did not suit him to publish abroad the reasons he might have for remaining in the West Indies, and for not joining the expedition to the southwards.

They were all standing by this, in groups discussing loudly and with great uproar. Captain Grognier's plan had already won wide approval. Diverse of the captains, however, had not yet pronounced themselves. And of these was Thomas l'Agnelet who alone amid his guests still sat at table, drinking in silence, and looking about him with vague eyes. Juana had left his side, and leaning, half-reclining in fact, in the embrasure of a port-hole, was talking with Loredano, doubtless questioning him about that strange refusal of his, a refusal that had caused the Adventurers no little astonishment.

Grognier meanwhile approached Thomas, and laying a hand on his shoulder:

"Captain l'Agnelet," said he, with utmost respect, "this is surely the most vast undertaking yet conceived since Filibustery first began! Are you not of my way of thinking? And truly I believe that success cannot fail to crown our efforts, on condition—and justly so—that we put all chances in our favour and leave nothing to hazard. *Ça donc!* And will you hear me out on this chapter, like the brave Coast Brother that you are? I, Grognier, will take command of the land force, and, as I mentioned a while ago, lead it from the north to the south, through swamps and precipices, through the forces of the Spanish, and through the hostile Indian tribes. And no child's play will this prove, well may you say. The fleet, meanwhile, sailing through the Panama dog-days and the icy waters of Magellan, must be commanded with like energy, and I would desire as its chief the most skilful and valiant man who ever sailed the seas. Now, to come

to the point, I know who that man is. It is you, brother l'Agnelet! And is it a bargain now between us, and will you be my man in this enterprise—by which I mean, will you be general commanding it with me, and my equal in every point? Shall we not, together, arm in arm, begin by forcing the gates of the capital cities of Panama and Lima, and end up by taking as our own the magnificent kingdom of Eldorado?"

He spoke in a tone as low as might conceivably reach its mark, for he was little desirous of being overheard by suspicious or jealous ears. Thomas, emerging from his reverie, looked him full in the face a moment, then rose, and took a few steps back and forth as though hesitating before making his decision and replying. Grognier, following him with his eyes, saw him pass close to Juana, who was still conversing with her Venetian, and even laughing as she did so, not without coquetry. But Thomas, passing close beside her, did not even raise his head to look at the pair.

As though with intention, however, Juana raised her voice, for the space of one sentence holding her own against the uproar that arose from all the Filibusters talking together. Juana, who doubtless approved Loredano for manifesting so little desire to go off in pursuit of the Southern Sea and the Kingdom of Gold, was saying:

"No more than you do I bite, Ser Loredano, for of a surety one must be either a madman, a loafer, or a coward thus to traverse five thousand miles of salt water, for fear of five frigates. . . ."

These words coming from a woman, Grognier did no more than shrug his shoulders disdainfully. But Thomas, whether he heard or not—he had still not raised his head—at that very instant made his decision, and gave his answer. And, through some mysterious and ironical chance, this answer was almost word for word the same as the one Loredano had a short while before furnished,

and of which Thomas had of a surety not heard one single word.

"Brother Grognier, my thanks, *de pardieu!* You do me much honour. . . . But, old as I am, I cannot go a-voyaging so far, or leave this Northern Ocean which has become as my very home. . . ."

## CHAPTER IX

THUS, under the very eyes of the royal Commissioners, and under the very noses of their frigates' cannon, the Filibusters began to organize that expedition to the south which was to be—history bears witness—the greatest of all Filibustering enterprises. Now, neither the King's gentlemen, Saint Laurent and Begon, nor the Governor Cussi Tarin, opposed to it the slightest obstacle. As the Captain Grognier had very well said, the Southern Ocean was outside the jurisdiction and control of the French. And by that very fact, the Adventurer squadron which was preparing to betake itself thither, at its own risk, and lacking all letters of marque, was not subject to French interference. It was quite enough for the French King's purposes that the squadron should be on its good behaviour during such time as it should remain in northern waters, and should refrain from setting off a single priming all the way from Tortuga to Magellan. Beyond the straits, God help us! it was the Spanish King's affair to keep the Adventurers in order, and surely he was sufficiently powerful a monarch to be able, without help, to purge his Southern Sea of all such thieves or pirates as were of a humour to skim it. For as to such piratical rascals, whether they were English or French mattered little, the governments at London and Versailles having many a time protested that they totally disavowed and repudiated such troublesome subjects. Moreover, the more effectively to reassure Messieurs de Cussi, Begon, and Saint Laurent on this

point, Captain Grognier secretly promised all three to renounce his French nationality as soon as he had passed though the straits, and, accordingly, to strike his white flag, hoisting in its stead another emblem which would never give His Catholic Majesty the slightest cause for picking a quarrel with his Most Christian Majesty, the King of France.

"And what emblem can that be?" asked the royal Commissioners, in astonishment.

"This emblem, sirs," replied the Filibuster captain, pulling from his pocket a bit of furled-up bunting that he unfurled before their eyes.

And every one of them, save Captain Grognier, shuddered at sight of it. For the bunting was black, and bore in each of its four corners, in white, a grinning death's-head.

Thus, relations which were secret, but not altogether lacking in courtesies, were established, perforce, between Filibustery and the King's agents—those very agents, also, who had been expressly charged by their master to stamp out and subdue Filibustery. Nevertheless, softened though they were, and the severity they had first used apparently relaxed, Commissioners Begon and Saint Laurent still persisted in their peacemaking purpose, and even pretended that with like energetic means, they would yet succeed in transforming the American Corsairs into farmers and tillers of the soil. Their toleration, however, applied only to such Adventurers as showed themselves docile to and respectful of the royal will, to such Adventurers as, with admirable submission, consented to betake themselves from the Antilles as soon as ever they could, and to carry their privateering to regions so remote that no faintest echo of their acts would ever importune the ears of the King. But certain other Adventurers, less prompt in obedience, were not permitted to enjoy a like forbearance.

And among these, Thomas,

As a mark of singular, and at the same time, ominous interest, on the monarch's part, King Louis had not forgotten the Corsair captain whom the Sieur de Gabaret, now grand marshal of France, had introduced to him some six years earlier. Now it is no mere flattery to say that King Louis the Great was a really great King. And if he never failed to recompense whomsoever was deserving of recompense, still less did he fail to punish whomsoever deserved punishment. When, therefore, thousands upon thousands of complaints began to pour into Versailles from Spaniards shrilly denouncing the thousands upon thousands of Filibusters and Gentlemen of the Sea who were robbing them of fortune and family, leaving them naught but frenzied terror in exchange, the King, running through the portfolios containing these innumerable complaints, and dictating his good pleasure in the matter to Monseigneur Colbert de Seigneley, Secretary of State, suddenly burst into a loud exclamation of pain and anger; for he had recognized among the names against which the most numerous accusations were brought that Agnelet on whom he had once in his very own château of St. Germain bestowed a title of nobility.

"What!" said he, deeply chagrined, yet firm, nevertheless, in his resolution, "what! And can so valiant a man have thus been changed from the hero that he was into a brigand and plunderer? If this be true, and if a prompt repentance come not post-haste upon the heels of such crimes as these, we shall find no pardon in our hearts for his error! Our past favours, far from protecting or covering a culprit guilty of such inexcusable acts, must, on the contrary, be charged against him, and a double punishment exacted!"

In the margin then of the *Instructions to His Majesty's Commissioners, charged with a mission to the West Indies,* the name "Thomas l'Agnelet" was inscribed in full in the

very own hand of the Secretary of State, the Marquis de Seigneley. And that is why, on the very day of their arrival at Tortuga, and while the Admiral's skiff was conveying them ashore, Messieurs de Saint Laurent and Begon, perceiving the *Belle Hermine* lying at anchor, and recognizing the craft as the now too famous frigate of Thomas l'Agnelet, likewise too famous, had neither of them been able to restrain a gesture of surprise and curiosity—a gesture which Thomas, on watch as it chanced at his port-hole, caught precisely as the visitors were passing within a few yards. But of its full significance he could not, of course, be aware; still less could he imagine that the gesture he had so idly noted was an ominous one, and might well indeed have been interpreted as a most redoubtable threat. . . .

The expedition to the south was continuing its preparations under the benevolent eyes of the royal Commissioners, and under the now mute cannon of the royal frigates. Thomas, from his *Belle Hermine*, still at anchor, had ample opportunity to gaze his full upon this curious spectacle. Yet, in spite of all the arguments imaginable, he could not reconcile himself to what was occurring there before him. Indeed, he obstinately refused to understand it in the slightest. What? Messieurs de Cussi, Saint Laurent, Begon, and their crew, after furiously fulminating against Filibustery and all Filibusters, were now so miraculously softened and calmed down that they were favouring this Filibustering enterprise, and even giving it their protection? . . . Yet no doubts were possible. Daily, whole convoys of skiffs and rafts, laden with arms, with lead, with gunpowder in cannon-cartridges and barrels, insolently came alongside the craft assembled for the expedition, making no slightest attempt at concealment.

Astounded by these events, Thomas finally reached the point where he could stand no more, and for a day at

least laid aside his taciturn humour. Louis Guénolé, amazed in turn, was forced to interrupt the longest of his afternoon prayers at the Corsair's abrupt summons to come and discuss these matters with him.

'*Sainte Vierge!*" roared Thomas, "*Sainte Vierge de la Grand' Porte!* And are these tripe-spillers to be allowed to do as they please, while to me nothing is allowed, nothing? Aren't we all of us Coast Brothers and Gentlemen of Fortune, and would they have me believe that I, I, Thomas l'Agnelet, am too black even for this Brotherhood? Tell me, brother Louis, what think you of all this? And is not Louis our King too just to suffer such injustice?"

Guénolé was at a loss what to answer. However, he feared the worst; and seizing this opportunity, belike the only one he would have, he embraced his beloved brother, and holding him close, weeping and sobbing the while, conjured him to renounce all, and obey the King—and, in so doing, obey God, who so sternly judges all murderers and such as are cruel at heart.

"Remember, brother. He Himself said, speaking to our holy Saint Peter, 'Whoso lives by the sword shall perish by the sword.'"

"Obey—I cannot obey!" said Thomas, his eyes on the ground.

Then, suddenly giving his shoulders a brusque shake, he came back to what he had first had in mind.

"But speak up, brother! Can you make head or tail of all this? And will you not explain to me why Filibustering should be permitted at Lima or Panama, and not permitted at Puerto Bello or Ciudad Real?"

"Do I know?" said Guénolé. "But anyway, if it's true, why don't we too set helm hard on Panama or Lima? And why didn't you sign the division of spoils wherein that Grognier fellow gave you so fat a share?"

On the instant Thomas lowered his head. For if he did not often give his confidence to Guénolé now, he would at

least have been ashamed of lying to him by so much as a word.

"She . . . did not want it," he murmured.

And Guénolé, at this, asked no further questions.

Then Thomas, throwing himself upon his brother, and in turn pressing him close, breast to breast:

"*Las!*" said he, speaking very low and as though deeply ashamed, "*las!* I love her! . . . I love her! . . . but she . . . she . . . Ah, brother Louis, I have no one but you, no one but you . . . let me count on you always, my Louis, always! . . ."

Now that very afternoon, having accompanied Juana ashore, and then running about with her from tavern to pothouse, because Juana claimed that she must shortly meet with diverse merry companions of hers, among them Loredano, Thomas of a sudden grew furiously irritated upon noticing several individuals, all of dubious appearance, following him about from one tavern sign to another, with the intent doubtless of overhearing his discourse and thus spying upon his projects.

Whipping out his sword, he charged, and the rabble scattered like a flock of crows when an eagle gives chase.

"What's the meaning of this?" cried he, drunk with fury. "Am I a traitor or rebel? By God, I'll be both if they push me too far!"

But Juana, who had stopped to wait for him, gave a scornful laugh.

"*Nenni*," said she. "That will you not be, and I defy you to become what you have said, you cringing dog, you, who can but howl, with not a fang left to bite with!"

For now she affected to despise him, and openly crossed him, ever reproaching him with being too docile in obeying the orders of Cussis, Saint Laurents, Begons, and others; and all because he had not yet gone back to privateering, the King's frigates still keeping the Tortoise under surveillance.

At these insults he never failed to turn deathly white. But once again he refrained from putting an end to her cackling as he should have done, with five or six good slaps fit to unhinge her jaw, or with a good trouncing that would most profitably have warmed her hide for her and given it a gloss like that of new satin.

Thus, peaceably enough, he came towards her, lamely arguing the while, like some Maître Pathelin, wrangling to win a poor case.

"Who's a cringing dog?" said he. "Is it me, you mean, when it takes twenty spies to keep an eye on me, for fear I may go where I please? Or is it other folk you refer to, such as those whom all the Governors and Commissioners in the neighbourhood are caressing and cajoling, as anyone can see, any day, in the middle of the roadstead and by broad daylight?"

But she had turned her back on him, and was no longer listening. Loredano had entered the tavern and was at that moment about to seat himself at a table not far from where she stood. She drew near him, rubbing against his shoulder, very like to a she-cat in heat rubbing against her tom.

"It's not you, Ser Loredano," said she thereupon, "it's not you, the Governor or the Commissioners either would dare to cajole! . . . And the flies have a care not to buzz too close to your sword, known to be as long as your patience is short!"

She leaned her head to one side, just time enough for a rapid glance at Thomas. But Thomas had not flinched. He was drinking, speechless, his body sunk in on itself, his gestures heavy and slow. She saw him gulp down, one after the other, four full finger-glasses of rum. Her audacity and impudence redoubled. She broke into loud bursts of jerky, nervous laughter. Then, suddenly leaning down, she kissed the Venetian full on the mouth. . . .

Thomas, head down, was doggedly staring at the ground.

## CHAPTER X

N the dark cabin—the door was closed and the port battened down—it was perishing hot. Thomas, sleepless, dripping with sweat, and almost suffocating, finally jumped from his bunk, and, half naked as he was, noiselessly made his way into the main cabin, then mounting the admiral's galley came out on the poop-deck. The night wind softly played with the folds of his shirt that fluttered wide open about him—a "fighting shirt" as sailors call the shifts that for fighting purposes are shorn of sleeve and collar—and cooled the loose sailcloth trunks flapping about his bare thighs. From starboard to larboard he paced, then up to the taffrail, where he paused to lean against the rear end of it, facing the wind and the open. The sky was alive with stars, and the sea, luminous far below the surface, as often in the tropics, seemed to enclose in its depths a myriad strange torches, whose watery radiance, too distant to give more than a glimmer to watchers above, flickered, was extinguished, and flared up again, from moment to moment, at the ebb and flow of the waves. A fair night truly, pure as a diamond.

"*Pardieu!*" growled Thomas, speaking for his own ears alone. "What a fool was I to try to sleep in that hell-hole of a cabin below when here on deck it is so pleasant. . . ."

Again and again he breathed deep with all his lungs, and the sea air, charged with the salt of spray and frag-

rant too with the sweet scents of the land near by, caressingly dried his temples, his neck, and his chest; and now, refreshed, he lingered, eyes fixed on the far horizon. . . .

There rode the frigates of the King, anchored within less than a mile. But he could descry naught of them, neither hull nor masts, only the bow lights, a flickering yellow glow. And they might easily have been taken for dim stars, tarnished by the light fog floating close above the level of the water. Thomas, looking straight before him without much heeding what he saw, did not at first notice them. And even when at midnight the admiral's ship struck eight bells, and the other four rang out the hour also, Thomas, listening to these faint and distant chimes, thought only of those belfries of his native Brittany that send high tinkling peals a-flying on the Sunday air, for few are the parishes rich enough to afford the great bells that boom out deep bass notes.

His reverie, however, did not last long, for the topmen on watch in the bows and at the gangways sang out the hour, as prescribed in the rules of His Majesty's ships. And the cry was repeated from ship to ship, and spread over the sea. Thomas then could do no less than call to mind that the squadron was there—the squadron he had so many times consigned to the Devil. And impatiently he clicked his tongue.

"So these accursed tubs must be forever blinding my eyes, and splitting my ear-drums, by night as by day!"

With a shrug he let go of the rail, and turned half-way round—so as not to see the ship's lights, so offensive to him now that he had recognized them. Growling to himself and cursing in anger, he crossed to the other side of the poop, walking at haphazard. But, doing so, he stumbled against the hatch of the main cabin. For fear of being overheard, he held in his oaths, the cabins under the poop-deck being almost directly below this hatch. Now of these cabins, four in all, and opening, each of them, into the main cabin, Juana occupied the largest;

of the remainder one was used by Thomas, one by Louis Guénolé, and the last was reserved for the mulatto slaves, Juana requiring that they be always at her orders, and near enough to come at the least call.

Having thus stumbled into the hatch, Thomas instinctively halted, and bent down to look through the open ventilator. He saw nothing, as might have been expected, save sheer darkness. But a puff of warm air rose to his nostrils; and brusquely he stood up. Among the heavy odors thus exhaled by the sleeping ship, there mingled an enervating perfume—that of Juana—a fragrance Thomas would have discerned amid ten thousand others. And Thomas, taking a quick step backwards, drew away from the hatch, stepped around it, and went to lean once more on the rail; but this time to leeward, and landward.

There, not a single light; nor did the coast stand out against the dark horizon. The sea, quieter on this side, seemed less luminous. Not far from the *Belle Hermine* a little skiff, anchored doubtless by a grapple, was barely visible, though it was dancing about in lively enough fashion, tugging at a too short anchor line. Thomas, had he looked with all his eyes—and they were strong and piercing enough—would of a surety have been astonished to discover neither fisherman nor oarsman in the skiff—no one in brief—a fact which alone made the craft mysterious enough, thus lying abandoned, more than a mile from shore. . . .

But Thomas was not looking at land or sky, and still less at any other vessel on the sea. Thomas, his eyes lowered so that he could see nothing at all save the vertical line of the frigate's flank where it met the lapping waves, once more forgot all in his reverie; and now, between tight lips, he was muttering words seemingly incoherent. One would have had to listen very closely to hear him. Once only his lips opened a little as he uttered, somewhat less inaudibly:

"Six, seven, eight . . . eight nights . . ."

Seemingly, he was counting the time that had passed since Juana had taken it into her head to sleep alone in her cabin, and also, in spite of pleadings alternating with threats, to bolt the door. This caprice of hers was not without precedent. Nevertheless, it had never before aroused in Thomas such blind rage, or caused him such acute suffering—suffering of heart, and suffering of body—the pain and the desperation of the damned. For such is the terrible justice of God that he often sends to those whom he will cast out from his Judgment Day a foretaste, while they are yet on earth, of the torments of the hereafter.

"Eight nights . . ." Thomas repeated, still leaning over the black waters.

Each of his hands held an elbow in its grip, and with such rage did his fingers clasp his flesh that his nails had torn their way into the very muscle, and drops of blood were gathering on the wound.

But suddenly the tense fingers opened. His mouth, wide-open, uttered no sound. Grasping the wood of the railing, and throwing the weight of his chest forward, he seemed about to plunge into the sea. He did not fall, however, but merely curved himself into a Z, that he might more closely and less obliquely view the outer wall of the ship.

Just below him, perpendicular to his eyes, a port-hole was opening—the port-hole of one of the four cabins under the poop-deck—the port-hole of the rear starboard cabin, which was Juana's. Now this port-hole was but half-closed—the upper lid being lowered, but the lower one dropped down. . . . Thomas could now, by the starlight, make out the vermillion paint of this lower port-lid. . . . There was no suspicious light issuing from the cabin. But a faint noise had just come from it —a noise which was neither the breathing of someone asleep, nor any of the sounds which may permissibly

come from the cabin of a woman when she is alone, whether waking or drowsing. . . . Thomas, holding on by feet and calves to the two uprights of the railing, leaned over still more. And as the strange sound was repeated, such a trembling shook feet, calves, and the whole suspended body, that the railing itself trembled and creaked—though this noise was merged in the continuous plaint of the rigging, plucked and pinched by the breeze. . . .

For the sound which Thomas had heard was the sound of a kiss. Of one kiss, and then another. . . .

And now Thomas was trembling no more. From his throat came a hoarse breathing and his lips, suddenly parched, muttered thrice a monosyllable—"Here!" A sort of groan it was, a groan of indignation, mingled with amazement and horror. Then Thomas resumed his listening, quite motionless now, and tense with that terrible calmness that he had taught his nerves when waiting for the moment of battle. He continued, then, to listen . . . and to hear. Again and again that sound that had caught his attention, again and again, sonorous, passionate, never-ending. And soon was added thereto a kind of moaning, infinitely sweet, and of infinite anguish—a moaning Thomas knew well, and recognized. And then Thomas ceased to listen. With a slow effort of his thigh muscles he pulled himself upright, set foot again on the poop-deck, let go the rail, and noiselessly glided toward the captain's ladder, and climbed down into the main cabin.

The perfume that had floated to him above was still floating about here too, and even more perceptible, as though recently shaken up and scattered about. Thomas shuddered, but did not stop. The door of his own cabin was ajar. Feeling his way, and silent as a shadow, he glided within the room. Cautiously groping, still without making a sound, he searched for his tinder, struck a

light, and lit the candle in the ship's lantern that hung from the wall. The flame, throwing a light on his face, showed it ashen pale, with eyes blazing like blue-black coals. Above his bunk two steel pistols, loaded and primed, hung next to a bare sword. Thomas took down the pistols, cocked them, thrust one into his sash, kept the other in his right fist, his first finger resting on the trigger, and grasping the lantern with his left, held it up at arm's length, so as to throw its light as far as possible. Whereupon, leaving his quarters, and crossing the main cabin, he knocked at Juana's door; then, with neither cry, nor blow, nor any sort of preliminary, like a frenzied stallion he kicked the door with such violence that the panel, shattered by the blow, fell inward, bolts, locks, key, hinges, and all showering down in fragments.

For the flash of an instant the cabin lay before him—for the bare duration of a lightning flash. But that was long enough for Thomas to see the disordered and ravaged bed, on which, naked, lay Juana, in the arms of a man. Thomas saw the man's body, fine-limbed and muscular, and his skin, white as a woman's—and his clothing, a mere shirt. But head and face lay in shadow. Thomas raised his pistol.

But, quicker than thought, the man was, all in an instant, free from the embrace and on his feet, ready to spring. Thomas paused before pulling the trigger, wishing to make sure of his aim. The man forthwith hurled himself upon Thomas, striking at his hands with both fists, to disarm him. Little chance had he of succeeding, for Thomas's hands were like vises. But the lantern, its top and sides battered in, exploded, and the candle rolled on the floor. At the same moment the man made another spring, fell to the ground to avoid the pistol-shot, sped like an arrow between Thomas's legs, and rushed out of the cabin. But Thomas, turning on his heel, in the dim light filtering through the opening of the hatch, divined his whereabouts. . . . He was close to the door

leading into Guénolé's cabin. . . . Thomas fired. And with a great crash the man fell like a slaughtered ox.

Dazzled by the flash of the shot, Thomas stood an instant like one grown blind. At his feet the overturned candle was still flickering. He seized it, raised it high in the air. And then a cry of amazement escaped him. The man was again standing up, and still in the same spot—in front of Guénolé's door. And he was not in flight now. On the contrary, he stood motionless, facing Thomas. Grasping his second pistol, Thomas advanced, the candle he brandished throwing out lurid yellow gleams. Of a sudden Thomas cried out again, and staggered—bewildered, maddened, his eyes starting from their sockets—the man was Louis Guénolé! Louis Guénolé, yes, no doubt of that—Louis Guénolé—in his shirt, his white skin gleaming in the candle-light, his firm muscles swelling on his well-knit limbs. . . .

And now again Thomas was moving forward. Louis Guénolé did not even stir. On his calm features there was no trace of fear, no trace of shame. Beside himself, Thomas looked at him, two, three seconds; and then, very low, as though breath failed him:

"You too, my brother Louis," he said, "you too, like the others?"

And, with a jerk, he pulled the trigger.

Louis Guénolé's mouth opened wide, and his startled eyes too widened; then he toppled over, stone dead. The bullet had struck below the heart, cutting clean through the main artery. And such a torrent of blood gushed out that Thomas, three paces away, felt his right hand and forearm wet from the spurting stream. The still smoking pistol dropped from his hand, and he stopped where he stood, as though frozen to the spot.

The sound of light steps broke the silence. Juana, naked, was coming out of the cabin. Thomas saw her advancing, unperturbed, almost smiling. She drew near, her eyes searching the body. At sight of it she quickly

raised her head. And her eyebrows drawn up to the very centre of her forehead betrayed her utter astonishment.

"Guénolé?" she said, as though not believing her eyes.

She looked about the cabin. Thomas, fixedly, stared at her. And as he did so, bitterly he regretted that there was not, in his sash, a third pistol.

But while they stood thus, face to face, another sound, distinct, though distant, made them each give a start, simultaneously . . . the resounding splash of a body plunging from a height into the sēa. And the sound was to Thomas like the shot of a musket crashing through his skull. Both his arms spread out wide, his hands jerked open. In a complete circle he pivoted around twice, and fell, face to the ground, in front of Guénolé's dead body. . . .

And Juana the while, Juana, who had also heard the sound, burst into triumphant and frightful laughter.

Even after that, he did not kill her.

Still laughing, she went back towards her cabin. And even, from the doorway, she dared call out to him,

"Come!"

If he did not follow her—at least, not right away—he had, by this, raised himself on hand and knees—if, I say, he did not follow her, it was because his wavering gaze chanced to fall on his other hand, the one from which the blood still dripped. And suddenly, mysteriously, he bethought him of the old hag of St. Malo, whom he had come upon five years before on the street of the Three Kings, near the postern of the Croix du Fief. And haggard, in overwhelming terror and despair, he repeated the prediction she had made—now fulfilled. "Blood on this hand . . . blood . . . the blood of someone who is near by . . . very near. . . ."

## CHAPTER XI

HE did not kill her—neither that night nor any other—never in fact.

And he was as though bound by the yoke that she had seemingly thrust down over his head and made fast around his neck. A yoke of the flesh, and bonds woven of delights of the flesh such as no will can ever untie.

When she said "Come!" he came. And the bleeding body of Louis Guénolé—of that Louis who had been to Thomas his Coast Brother, and his own brother, his own man, and more, his true father and mother, his brothers, sisters, friends, all in one—the blood-streaming corpse that had been Louis Guénolé, although Thomas never ceased to see it, a terrible phantom, in every one of his dreams, and although he never failed to weep and sob in the bitter pain of cruel remorse—this bleeding corpse of Louis Guénolé's had, for all that, not proven a very lasting obstacle between Thomas and Juana . . . and even, let us state quite frankly, that on the very night following the night of the murder, Juana, brazenly opening her door to Thomas again, had cried to him, "Come!" . . . and even that very night, Thomas had obeyed. . . .

Now when he came, when he stepped across the threshhold of her cabin, which she still often bolted against him, out of sheer audacity . . . or perhaps, out of supreme cunning—when, I say, he had finally come in, she seemed at first to be quite unaware of his presence. Not a glance did she give him, nor, if she chanced to be singing, did she

interrupt her song; still less, if she chanced to be arraying herself in her finery, did she stop what she was doing.

At times she would remain attired in the rich clothes she had worn all day, for she still loved above all else fine stuffs and sumptuous gewgaws, endeavoring, even in the midocean of the Americas, to follow the changing fashions of the Court of Versailles, or at least to keep up with all that she could learn of them, or with what she supposed them to be. Thus she was ever, her whole life long, greatly extravagant in the matter of powder, rouge, patches, essences, and perfumes. More often yet, however, Thomas found her naked, and lying on that same couch where, a few days before, he had found her equally naked . . . and someone with her. . . .

And much pleasure she derived then in coldly contemplating the desire of this man, once her master, and henceforth her dishonoured slave. Lying back among the cushions, her arms spread wide, her legs asprawl, she would take her time at sucking a sweetmeat, or breathing in the fragrance of a handkerchief dripping with violet water. After a while she would, it is true, throw aside her perfume or her sweetmeat. But it was merely to yawn at her ease—a lascivious yawn which revealed the sweet, forbidden fruit of her open mouth—lips warm and agile, teeth skilful in biting, and a tongue cunning in caress. Then, having yawned, she would stretch, with slow languourous gestures extending her whole body, revealing successively belly and buttocks, back, breasts, and thighs. And Thomas, fevered with desire, but submissive, as a wild beast is submissive to his tamer, watched her—without stirring by a hair, nor so much as a wink, so long as she did not call him—but call him at last she did, her own nerves finally exasperated—called him as one calls a dog, with a brusque and imperious gesture. . . .

And then their bodies wound about one another.

Even now that she was an acclaimed Filibusteress, even

now after so many battles and massacres, after living in so many different climes, after wandering through so many lands, she was still the Andalusian maid, still piously devout, and she still knelt at the feet of her Brunette, offering up prayers for loves more ardent still. And many a time, just as her lover was grasping her to him, she would push him away—for the duration of one lost caress—in order, by a hurried sign of the cross, to sanctify the embrace.

A violent, brutal, savage embrace it was—and masterly. From the hold of those two slim, satin-textured arms, those tapering hands with nails like rose petals, the Corsair would emerge, spent, drowsing, swooning, his limbs numb, his very marrow parched. And lying on the trampled, disordered, ravaged bed, he was like a soldier hurled to the ground by a cannon-shot—stunned, and motionless.

And Juana, leaning over him, covered him with a strange, brooding gaze.

There was too much of the woman in her—too much pride also—to permit her ever to feign, as she lay in the arms of a man, a pleasure she did not feel; and for days she would remain unyielding, cold, answering with a burst of laughter to the sobs and frantic supplications of her lover. But, more often, she too grew hot with the game, and gave herself utterly to it, winding her fingers about the thighs that pressed her close, and biting, scratching, uttering wild cries . . . only to fall at last from the height of the pleasure beyond which she had passed, to the depths of that silent and mournful abyss, into which Thomas too had plunged, there to lie beside him, as crushed and spent as he.

And for this she loved him, for this pleasure that he gave her, the like of which no other man had been able to equal—although she had tried often enough to find its

match, persisting in her search, like the lecherous bawd she was . . . no other man, not even the Venetian, though an expert and ingenious lover, true to the genius of his race. But for her, sprung of a race more simple and violent, no refinement, no delicacy of caress could equal sheer strength and supreme passion. . . .

And so she loved him, Thomas, for being the strongest. . . . But she hated him also, hated him because of the very love that possessed her, and which irked her as a bondage. Her pride, the overweening pride of a slave become master, was exasperated by it. And at times she went so far as to hate herself for this love, and to reproach herself for every caress she enjoyed, every embrace she sought or submitted to, every kiss received or bestowed, as for so many crimes and base acts of cowardice. . . .

Then, to make amends in her own eyes for the cowardice and crimes, she would redouble her disdain and her harshness, making every effort in her power to persuade and convince herself that notwithstanding the pleasures they shared, and shared with an equal desire, equally tyrannical over both of them, nevertheless, she remained queen, and Thomas the slave. And eagerly she seized every opportunity to exercise this royal power of hers, at the expense of her slave Thomas.

Thus, a few days after Louis Guénolé's death, she constrained Thomas to weigh anchor and to set sail from Tortuga, and all for the sole purpose of preventing him from carrying out the project he had formed of making off from the roads at the very same time as the Filibusters' fleet that was to sail southwards, he having conceived this means of not causing his departure to be noticed, thanks to the confusion that would doubtless attend the manœuvres of so numerous a squadron.

But Juana having otherwise decreed, the *Belle Hermine* sailed out of the harbour alone, a long time before the expedition to the south weighed anchor, and with no attempt at concealment. . . .

## CHAPTER XII

SCARCELY three weeks later, on the very day of her return to the Tortoise, the *Belle Hermine* was honoured with a visit as unexpected as it was singular. . . .

Towards evening — Thomas had come to anchor at the very stroke of noon—just as the sun was plunging into the western ocean, a skiff pushed off from shore, and gently swam out in the direction of the St. Malo frigate—a very small skiff, with but a single Negro managing its two oars. In this frail craft sat a passenger, seemingly desirous of concealing his features from view, for the downturned brim of his vast hat hid fully three-quarters of his face. The night, fast falling, like all tropical nights, was already dark even before the skiff had come alongside the Corsair. It drew near, however, and Thomas, who, by chance, was walking to and fro on the poop-deck, heard his own name being called aloud. He looked over the side. The man in the wide brimmed hat was parleying with a sailor of the watch. Thomas descended to meet the visitor at the same time that the latter was coming aboard by the gangway ladder. They met in the middle of the quarter-deck. And much was Thomas amazed thereupon at recognizing Monsieur de Cussi Tarin, Governor for the King and for the gentlemen of the Compagnie Occidentale of La Tortue, and San Domingo.

Monsieur de Cussi Tarin, with a sharp glance at his host, put a finger to his lips. He had not, it seemed,

given his name to the sailor. Thomas, scenting a mystery —small difficulty indeed in so doing—without a word led the way into the main cabin. There, after repeated civilities, they both sat down, and being seated, considered one another attentively, still in unbroken silence. Thomas, dumbfounded, could no more than believe his eyes. He himself had never paid his respects to Monsieur de Cussi —which only made the step taken by so considerable a personage all the more unwonted and extraordinary. It was soon explained, however, and at a stroke.

In fact, having at first hesitated his fill, like a man who does not know at which end to begin the discussion of a grave matter, the Governor of the King made a sudden resolve, and, in a manner, took the bull by the horns; for, without any oratorical precautions, he began to ask Thomas, right out of a clear sky, what the *Belle Hermine* had been doing during her recent sortie on the high seas, and whether, by mischance, she had not taken some prizes despite His Majesty's formal orders to the contrary.

The Governor's quick eyes were scrutinizing his host's face. Thomas, thus questioned, grew very red and was about to rise.

"Don't let my question offend you," cried Monsieur de Cussi Tarin, holding the Corsair back by the sleeve of his doublet. "My question, indeed, is not meant to be offensive! And, I conjure you, *Capitaine* l'Agnelet—deign but to think of it for a moment—my very presence on board your ship should convince you of the excellence of my intentions. Upon my honour, monsieur, I come to you for your good. And it will not be my fault if I do not to-day render you the most signal service!"

Astonished, Thomas settled back in his chair. Monsieur de Cussi drew his own closer, and held out his hand, palm up, to Thomas.

"Your hand then, and hear me out!" he continued, with some vehemence. "Hear me out and you will have no further doubts of what I say."

Whereupon he delivered to Thomas a harangue which was not without eloquence, complimenting him first on his rare valour, and on the prodigious number of courageous undertakings and incredible exploits which had brought him the unparalleled renown that he enjoyed from one end of America to the other. That such a brave man as the *Capitaine* l'Agnelet should run the risk of being some fine day very ill-rewarded for his sublime bravery, that was something which Monsieur de Cussi Tarin could not bear to contemplate. And, honest gentleman and good soldier that he was, he had vowed to himself to provide in advance a remedy against such an untoward event.

"*Oui-da?*" said Thomas, not understanding a jot of all this.

"*Oui-da!*" affirmed Monsieur de Cussi. "And without more ado I am coming to my story."

He unbuttoned two buttons of his coat and fumbled in his pockets, as though in search of some object or other.

"*Captaine* l'Agnelet," he pursued meanwhile, "you remember perhaps that we have met before—in the Isle aux Vaches, on the eve of that expedition, at once brilliant and deplorable, which you and your comrade Filibusters conducted last year against Vera Cruz. On that occasion I came into the midst of your assembly to acquaint it with the orders formally issued by His Majesty the King of France. And I remember that you . . . yes, monsieur, you in person, made me a very courteous reply . . . but a reply betraying incredulity. Is that true, or am I mistaken? I implore you to answer me on this point quite without fear and in all sincerity."

The word "fear" was not one of those words which Thomas had ever been able to hear without anger.

"*Pardieu!*" said he brusquely. "I fear nothing in the world, monsieur, and you are not mistaken. Monsieur, but a while ago you called me a brave man. And such I am, truly. And the King as much so as I, and if I say this, it is because I know whereof I speak, or *Dieu me*

*damne!* How, then, can I believe that a brave man, such as this King of ours, could ever desire to bring his threats to bear—and threats of the worst, too, so they try to make me believe, on a brave man like me, for a few trifling Spaniards sent to the bottom or a few Dutchmen hoist to the yard-arm? Especially, after the brave fellow in question—myself, to speak plain—has served our brave fellow of a King as I have done!"

He straightened proudly on his chair, and laid a clenched fist on his hip.

But Monsieur de Cussi gave a shrug.

"*Capitaine* l'Agnelet," said he, speaking very slowly and in the gravest of tones, "the King, *certes*, is as brave a man as you say, and it would be a mortal sin merely to doubt it. Nevertheless, he has given the orders in question, he has signed the edicts which you refuse to believe in, and he has in all truth threatened with the death penalty such as go counter to his commands. Of all this there is proof, and it is to bring you this proof, to let you see it with your own eyes, and touch it with your own hands, that I have come on board your ship!"

He had at last pulled from his doubtlet a paper folded in quarto, which he spread out and handed to the Corsair; and this paper was none other than an exact copy of the *Instructions to the Commissioners of His Majesty charged with a mission in the West Indies*. Thomas, taken aback, began to spell out the first words, not without some trouble, for the writing was close and fine. He had belike not yet deciphered more than half a dozen lines when Monsieur de Cussi Tarin interrupted him:

"When you have read for yourself," said he, with sincere regret, "when you have read and seen for yourself, then you will be convinced. . . . *Monsieur*, I have tried to give you a real warning, and for this purpose, to show you your own name written there in the hand of Monseigneur Colbert de Seigneley himself, and, without any doubt, at the dictation of the King!"

At this, Thomas started, like a carp at a shadow.

"My name?" he exclaimed.

"Your name, yes!" replied Monsieur de Cussi Tarin. "Your name in full: 'Thomas Trublet, Sieur de l'Agnelet!' "

He took from Thomas's hands the copy so annoyingly close-written, and with a finger pointed out the note in the margin, that King Louis had in truth dictated. And good occasion now had Thomas to open his eyes wide with astonishment.

"Well?" said the Governor, after a very long pause.

But Thomas, having read once, was reading again, and again. The last sentence especially held his gaze, like some fatal magnet.

". . . And unless prompt repentance should follow the crime, our past favours will very justly turn against the criminal, redoubling the severity of his punishment."

"I think," Monsieur de Cussi resumed, "that now you no longer have any doubts?"

Thomas had at last bowed his head. He did not reply. And what, indeed, could he have replied? True it was that his doubts had been dispelled, but true it was also that he was far from understanding either what he saw or heard.

Meanwhile the King's Governor had risen.

"Monsieur de l'Agnelet," said he then with solemnity, "I have the honour to salute you, as I shall now withdraw. I need not observe, of course, that it is very far from here to the Government."

Thomas, without a word, rose also, and mechanically saluted his guest.

Monsieur de Cussi Tarin, standing, hat in hand, was about to cross the threshold of the main cabin. Yet he stopped, as though he had not yet delivered himself of all that he had to say, and, somewhat abruptly, terminated the interview as follows:

"Monsieur, suffer me to implore you once more not to forget this. . . . Nothing less than your head is at stake . . . for henceforth all such as engage in privateering will be viewed, not as Corsairs, but as *pirates*. Pirates, yes, monsieur, and that is what, above all else, I wanted to tell you. And now I have told you, Adieu, monsieur."

And he retired.

Now as soon as Thomas had escorted his visitor to the gangplank, and returned once more to the main cabin, a door, that for sometime now had stood ajar, opened wide, and Juana, who had been eavesdropping, appeared on the threshold.

Thomas sat pondering these matters, and to him she came and struck him on the shoulder.

"*Ça donc!*" said she mockingly. "We're as meek as a clipped ewe now, since the King so desires! Tell me, Thomas, boy, where's your plough?"

He didn't understand.

"My plough?"

"*Pardieu!*" said she, "your plough, yes, your plough! Aren't you ready to become a farmer?"

He gave a shrug, and did not answer. And, insulting now in voice and gesture, she mimicked:

"Nothing less than your head is at stake, my Thomas! And to save a pretty head such as this one—a fine head, *oui-da!* what would one not do! Come on then with your rake, scythe, hoe and spade! When do we disembark?"

Furious, he stamped his foot.

"Hold your tongue!" he growled. "Who's talking of disembarking?"

She feigned the utmost astonishment.

"What then? But, *mon coeur*, you're not going to disobey! What, disobey that good Governor Cussi Tarin, such a faithful friend as he is too? Don't say you're going to hurt his feelings! When he has just told you

what he wants . . . and would you then at once run counter to his desires?"

He turned away his head, drooping it over a shoulder.

"No, not that!" said he. "Not right away . . ."

She burst into contemptuous laughter.

"Coward!" she cried between the bursts of her laughter. "Coward! Ah! I knew it!"

He walked straight towards her, fists clenched.

"What is that you knew?"

She stopped and looked at him, her black eyes flaming.

"You ask me? . . . You dare to ask me?" she cried.

He bowed his head with a heavy jerk.

"Answer me, whore that you are! . . . What's that you knew?"

Her fingers grew tense, ready to claw.

"Coward!" she repeated. "I knew that you would be afraid, that you would obey, that you would lie down, cringing hound that you are! I knew that you would be only too happy to run away thus from war and battles, just as you always run away, always, from people and things when they are formidable, just as you have always run away from . . ."

She stopped, hesitating, in spite of her reckless audacity, before the Corsair's terrible glance. But, the very next moment she blushed thus to hesitate, for she was brave:

"From all my lovers! . . . Just as you ran away . . ."

She did not finish her sentence. For the first time he had raised a hand upon her. He struck her. And the blow threw her to the floor, her nose bruised, her mouth streaming blood.

He rushed on the fallen body, frantic, drunk with rage. Ready to kill, he struck again.

"Stop!" he howled, "hold your tongue!"

But with the strength of sheer rage she raised herself on both elbows:

"Coward! Coward!" she howled in turn, and her howling was louder even than his. "Coward, yes, you dare kill me, but you wouldn't dare kill others I know! Coward! Coward! Go away rather! Run away, quick; take to your heels! Go dig your field, the field your Cussi will give you—it's your price, the price of a coward! Coward! . . ."

He was still striking her. And she fell back silenced, at last, strength and energy spent, and, of a sudden began to weep, what with pain and rage. And then he left off, and with his foot turned over the inert body.

But she had not lost consciousness. And she heard him as, standing outside the main cabin, he roared his orders to the crew in a voice like thunderclap or cannon.

"Gun crews to your places, boatswains out, everyone above decks, *de pardieu!* Every man at his post, to weigh anchor!"

And, although the night was by now black as pitch, and though there was to be no moon, a half-hour later the *Belle Hermine*, sails set, was under way,

## CHAPTER XIII

SEVEN days later, the *Belle Hermine* came back to the Tortoise. . . .

There were high festivities on the King's frigates that day as it chanced. The commodore, a man of titled rank, was holding a reception in honour of the Governor Cussi Tarin, and His Majesty's two Commissioners, Messieurs Saint Laurent and Begon—although these last were mere lawyers; still, at fifteen hundred leagues from Versailles, etiquette may well be somewhat relaxed. To this naval celebration all the notables of the island had been invited, and the flagship, bedecked with ensigns, and festooned with flowers and leaves, had taken on the aspect of a floating palace. A tent of crimson velvet, gold-fringed, rose from the poop-deck, and beneath it noble guests lolled at ease around a long table laden with excellent wines, beer, cider, lemonade, and other similar beverages, and many a handsome structure of chocolate, heaped-up fruits, and pastry—on which all feasted with right good-will, tossing off bumper after bumper to the King's health—so much so, indeed, that long before sundown, albeit the refreshments had been served only since shortly after noonday, a noisy gaiety had taken possession of the entire company, and songs, bursts of merriment, and a joyous uproar now prevailed in the whole assemblage.

Nevertheless, the watch was not neglectful of its duties, and the helmsmen swept the horizon with their spyglasses,

observing all that exactitude which Monsieur de Colbert's regulations had made fashionable on the ships of His Very Christian Majesty. And thus even at the moment when the festivities were at their height, one of the petty-officers did not hesitate to come within the very tent itself—that velvet tent with gold fringes that sheltered the banqueters—to advise the commodore of a sail approaching the roadstead.

The commodore at that very moment was raising a glass to his lips. The news was in itself not extraordinary, and he received it with a pleasantry.

"*Corbleu!*" said he, raising his bumper, "that sail you announce is certainly a most opportune arrival! And a welcome to her! Gentlemen, let us drink to the sail's health!"

And they did so. But the quartermaster, bonnet in hand and heels clicked close, did not retire. And perceiving this:

"What, now?" said the commodore, "and what are you doing there, my lad, standing as stiff as a stick of sealing-wax? Speak, *corbleu!*"

"Admiral," said the lad, "the sail in question is . . . as it happens . . ."

"What? Speak out!"

"Sir, the sail I'm telling you of is the very spitt'n image of the cursed Corsair that weighed anchor out of here last week. . . ."

"*Hola!*" exclaimed the admiral, suddenly as serious as an archdeacon, "the *Belle Hermine* is it, you mean? Thomas l'Agnelet's boat?"

The name was like the flourish of a magician's wand. Laughter and song were extinguished, and Monsieur de Cussi Tarin turned pale. Messieurs Saint Laurent and Begon drew near, pricking up their ears.

The commodore however remained calm. And even, he gave a shrug:

"*Bah!*" said he after a moment, "Thomas l'Agnelet, or

some other, what matter to us? Let him come then, if it be he. Is it the first time that his *Belle Hermine* has gone off on an eight- or ten-day cruise, doubtless to break in a crew of novices?"

But at the word "novices" Governor Cussi shook his head. The helmsman quartermaster, however, stood open-mouthed, but speechless, facing the commodore.

"And will you have done?" cried the latter, growing angry. "What are you after now, you blackguard of a Jew sailor you, you dirty Pope's soldier? A glass of wine is it you're hankering after, or a good hard kick?"

For such is the jovial style ships' officers adopt when speaking to their sailors. And it had the effect of at once unloosing the quartermaster's tongue.

"Not I, sir," he replied, "but there's this to report too, sir, and it's that the Corsair frigate isn't going to her anchorage the same as before."

"How's that?" asked the commodore, in surprise.

The helmsman stood in the opening of the tent, and stretched out an arm to the westward.

"If your lordship will look . . ."

Their curiosity aroused, several of the commodore's guests followed him out of the tent. . . .

And they saw. . . .

The *Belle Hermine* was by now at no great distance. Every sail set, for the sea was at peace under the south breeze, she was bearing hard down on the roadstead in such wise that the King's officers could as yet see nothing but the Corsair's bow lights, the poop lights being masked by the same.

But scarcely more was needed to make out clearly enough four of the frigate's yards—to wit, the spritsail, the foresail, the foretops'l, and the topgallant. Now from the eight yard-arms of these four yards there dangled strange pendants. And no sooner had the commodore set his eye to the eye-piece of one of the wheel-house spyglasses that had been hastily brought to him,

than a loud cry escaped him, a cry of horror, and almost of dismay. . . .

For it was the corpses of executed prisoners that dangled there in gruesome clusters, the corpses of dead Spaniards—as one could see by their clothing and features—the corpses of prisoners, hung out, some high, some low on the branching yards—that Thomas was thus bringing back, strung by two and two, by three and three, by four and four, from every block of the rigging. . . .

Bravado—yes, haughty and savage bravado it was, to close at one stroke Juana's ever-insulting mouth. Not once but twenty times had she heaped upon him all the insults and outrages her writhing furious lips had once before hurled at her lover. And implacably she had returned a hundredfold every one of the blows he had dealt her in their last frightful quarrel; dealing them back to him under the form, infinitely worse, of scornful raillery or scorching sarcasm. And thus goaded, Thomas had resolved to make an end of his torment by offering her peremptory proof that neither His Majesty's orders, nor the counsel of Governor Cussi, nor the vain presence of five royal frigates could prevail against his will, his, Thomas l'Agnelet's!

Issuing then from the Tortoise through the western channel, the *Belle Hermine* had set sail for Santiago de Cuba, firmly resolved to make a capture there, even though forced for the purpose to penetrate into the outer harbour under the Spanish batteries. But fate had otherwise disposed, and a strong blow from the north had driven the frigate hard on to Cape Tiburon, on the westernmost point of San Domingo. And in the very waters where, eight years earlier, by the capture of a galleon sailing heavily laden from Ciudad Real, Thomas l'Agnelet had begun the solid structure of his fame and fortune, a merchantman, homeward bound to Europe, with a cargo of Campeachy wood and spices, had the misfortune to

cross the path of the Gentlemen of Fortune. Out of bravado here also, and to show his disdain of the perils pointed out by the Sieur de Cussi, Thomas, on attacking the merchantman, had run up, not the Malouin pavillon with its scarlet quartering, but the funeral flag which was now in all truth his flag—the black standard with a white death's-head in each corner—and this he flew even above his own standard, the gold Agnelet on crimson ground. The Spaniard, putting to flight in frantic terror, had fired her single swivel-gun; and in punishment for this error, Thomas, the victor, had not hesitated to massacre this ill-fated crew to the very last man, then—still under the stinging whip of Juana's railleries—he had grown so savage with fury and rage that he had ordered every corpse to be strung from the yard-arms high and low, and thus bedecked was now returning to spread out before the very eyes of the royal commissioners this appalling and audacious cargo.

And now the *Belle Hermine* luffed to sail closer to the wind, doubtless the better to choose her anchorage. And as she did so she discovered to the King's officers still grouped around the entrance to the commodore's tent, her four masts, distinctly outlined. And again a cry broke from the group, this time in good truth overwhelmed with anguish and horror; for each of the four bore suspended from it a ghastly burden . . . forty corpses, hung by their necks, and at ever roll of the ship swinging to and fro among the bellying white sails. . . .

The sound of shattering glass made itself heard above the general outcry. The commodore had hurled his still brimming goblet to the deck; imperious, terrible to behold, he commanded:

"To the flag-gear! Signal the *Astrée* . . ."

The *Astrée* was the smallest of the five royal frigates; she carried but fourteen cannon and was so slight of scantling that she seemed rather to be one of those small

vessels, English-built, which were then only just beginning to be seen on the high seas, and that we now call corvettes.

The admiral's voice resounded so clear and loud that not one of the four hundred sailors of the flagship lost a syllable of the orders given:

"Signal the *Astrée* to haul in her cable, weigh anchor, board the pirate, and bring me, on my own ship, the whole damned crew, in irons."

As though in spite of himself, Monsieur de Cussi Tarin took a step toward the commodore, and addressed him, though he spoke very low:

"Marquis . . ."

Still quivering with indignation, the King's general turned briskly towards him.

"Monsieur le Gouverneur?"

But the Governor, head lowered, and with anxious brow, seemed to be struggling hard to swallow the words he had been about to say.

It was only at the end of a long pause that he resumed, in a very different tone:

"Isn't the *Astrée* a somewhat frail craft for such a mission?" he ventured.

Almost choking, the commodore violently crossed his arms on his chest.

"What's that? Do you presume for a single moment to suppose that these heartless scoundrels could find the courage to dare to rebel against us, who represent His Majesty?"

Already the flags and pendants of the signal were snapping in the breeze. And on board the *Astrée* could be heard the rat-tat-tat of a drum, and the pipe of the boatswains' whistle. . . .

On board the *Belle Hermine*, Thomas, indifferent to the ship's working, was still in the main cabin, and Juana with him. She had, that day, put on her handsomest

dress, all of pansy-coloured taffeta, stiff with embroidery of gold over gold, with, underneath, a white satin kirtle magnificently overlaid with the finest point lace.

By notable exception they were on amicable terms together, dispensing coquetries of word and gesture, as they drank the wine, destined to some cardinal, that had been harvested on the recent prize; when suddenly one of the sailors, banging with his fist on the door, made known to the captain that "a god-damned royal frigate was steering like a god-damned filthy whore just so as to stand in the course of the Gentlemen of Fortune." At which Thomas promptly went up to the quarter-deck and Juana with him.

And in truth the *Astrée* was manœuvring as the lad had said. Still under but little headway, with respect to the *Belle Hermine*, she was keeping so close to the wind, trimming her sails pointwise, and tightening every rope, that the St. Malo frigate already felt encumbered in her operations. Only three, or at most four, hundred paces now separated the two craft.

"*Là, aussi donc*," growled one of the gunners, with an eye on Thomas. "And aren't we going to clip a wing from this luckless piece of poultry?"

He went up to his piece and took out the tampion. The other gunners followed his example. Already—no one knew by whose hand—the hatch to the powder magazine had been opened.

Thomas, knitting his brows, was examining the royal frigate. Juana, standing beside him, laughed, sneering.

And then a cry ran over the sea. Speaking trumpet to his mouth, the *Astrée's* captain was hailing the Corsair frigate. Attentively, the Gentlemen of Fortune listened, Thomas replying.

"*Ho, de la Belle Hermine!*"

"*Ho?*"

"In the name of the King, strike your emblem!"

"*Ho?*"

"Strike your emblem, I say! Surrender!"

Thunderstruck, Thomas, who had expected everything except that, raised his eyes to the mainmast, then towards the poop. Above the first the black flag with the four white death's-heads still floated, and above the latter the blood-red flag that bore the golden Agnelet.

The King's officer, doubting whether he had been clearly heard, was repeating, louder than ever:

"Surrender! Strike your colours!"

And instantly a sudden tumult swept through the Corsair crew. These lads, who never in their lives had known defeat or retreat, and still less capture, all simultaneously burst into laughter, and still shaking with laughter hastened to the posts they occupied in battle. So speedily did they find their places that when Thomas, having at his leisure contemplated the two fluttering emblems, turned to survey the deck of his frigate, he discovered it to be already in fighting array, and ready, with fire and flame, to give answer to the presumption of the royal vessel. And not a doubt beside but that in three broadsides the *Belle Hermine* could have crushed the *Astrée* beyond remedy. For between these two ships things would have gone as in a duel between a master-swordsman and some poor devil handling a sword for the first time.

"Strike your colours, in the King's name!" the captain of the *Astrée* shouted once more.

And then Thomas, laughing himself now, as his whole crew had laughed, unsheathed his sword, and extended its naked blade towards the frigate that stood in his path. And he was just opening his mouth to give the order "Fire!" when the frigate, herself ready to give combat, and do her duty, suddenly displayed, at mainmast and poop, the colors of the kingdom of France—to wit, the white bunting, or satin, bearing the Fleur-de-Lys, with His Majesty's coat-of-arms, azure and gold. . . .

His Majesty's coat-of-arms, just as it had floated above him when, long ago, Thomas Trublet, Sieur de

l'Agnelet, had first gazed upon it, and saluted it and paid it reverence, both knees to the ground, while that very same coat-of-arms unfolding on the wind had proudly displayed itself as the very centre of the royal emblem that so proudly flew above the castle of St. Germain-en-Laye. . . .

Now all the lads, the Gentlemen of Fortune, were steadily eyeing the captain, watching for his first gesture or his first cry to begin the battle. And every man of them suddenly began to strain his eyes, thinking he had gone blind, and to rub his eyelids.

For Thomas l'Agnelet, having seen and recognized the emblem of the King of France, gave a long shudder that shook every limb, then let his right arm fall to his side, and lowered his head until his chin touched his chest; and finally, his fingers let go the naked sword, which fell flat on the deck with a mournful clatter. And as the captain of the royal frigate shouted, for the last time, "In the King's name!" and as Juana in sheer stupefaction broke into a loud cry that ended in a convulsive laugh of rage, Thomas l'Agnelet, refusing to fight against this emblem, refusing to raise his hand against the Fleur-de-Lys, advanced with a firm step to the flag-gear, and with his own hand was hauling down his emblem, obeying the King's orders . . . striking his colours . . . surrendering. . . .

# BOOK VII

# THE YARD-ARM

## CHAPTER I

*AKEN from the minutes in the record office of the Royal French Admiralty, special section detailed to the Ile Tortue.*

"From the testimony given by the chief officers or their superiors, found on the captured pirate frigate known as the *Belle Hermine* of St. Malo, armed with twenty cannon, and captured by the King's ship, *Astrée*, of the squadron under the command of Monsieur le marquis de Plessis-Corlay, Admiral. A matter to which we, Messieurs Guy de Goet-Quintin, chevalier, and Seigneur de Losquet, counsellor, with jurisdiction over the civil and criminal courts of the Admiralty Office in the section thereof assigned to La Tortue, have given due consideration by order of Messieurs Saint Laurent, Begon, Commissioners of the King, charged with a special mission.

"To this end, having presented ourselves at the dwelling of the Sieur Trébabu, provost of the Marine at this port, wherein is confined the captain, or commander-in-chief of said pirate vessel, the same being bound, hand and foot, with double-linked chains—in the presence of said royal Commissioners, in the presence of the second assistant counsellor; with, as secretary, duly sworn, master Joseph Korcuf, assigned to the keeping of the

records; having thereupon all entered the cell of said pirate captain, a man of great stature, blond of beard and wig, the prisoner was interrogated as follows, having first, hand up-raised, sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth, and naught but the truth; this on the thirtieth day of November, 1684:

"On being questioned, in due form, as to his name, etc., etc.,

"Answered: That he was named Thomas Trublet, Sieur de l'Agnelet, nobleman, aged thirty-four or thereabouts, ship's captain in the armies of His Majesty the King of France, native of St. Malo, residing on board the private frigate named the *Belle Hermine*, and of the Holy Catholic Faith.

"Questioned, etc.?

"Replied: That his Majesty King Louis the Great had deigned to confer upon him letters of nobility, in the royal castle of St. Germain-en-Laye, in the year 1678; in accordance with which the said Sieur de l'Agnelet was to wear as his coat of arms a shield, guled, with three ships gold-rigged, in full sail on azure sea, surmounted by a lamb, *or*, beside two Fleurs-de-lys of the same; that His Majesty likewise deigned to bestow upon him the rank of ship's captain, on a ship owned by the said Sieur de l'Agnelet.

"Questioned as to how a man of noble rank could render himself guilty of the acts imputed to him, acts infamous as much for their very frightful cruelty as for their being in disobedience to the King, our royal master, and hence a felony?

"Denied the fact and protested that he was never a felon, proclaiming himself, although a faithful servitor of the King, a Gentleman of Fortune, and hence claiming release from all obedience.

"Questioned, etc.?

"Replied: that on the twenty-first of November, of the current month (French reckoning) he was boarded, at the entrance to the port of La Tortue, towards five of the afternoon, by a ship of the King of France, of the size of a light frigate or corvette; which vessel, without any explanation thereof, summoned him to surrender, running up the royal colours to the masthead and affixing them thereto, upon making said summons.. Whereupon he, Thomas l'Agnelet, though incomparably superior in forces to said royal vessel, repulsed all the entreaties of his companions, who, indignant at such discourteous treatment, were desirous of resisting and fighting, and himself complied with the order, striking his colours, as requested, before the royal emblem—and this, out of sole deference and reverence for His Majesty.

"Questioned, etc.?

"Replied: that always, in all circumstances just as in this one, he has given evidence of the most perfect submissiveness to and most profound respect for the King of France, whom he claims to cherish and greatly love.

"Questioned, as to what manner of proof he could give of this alleged submissiveness, when it is known to everyone that, on the contrary, the accused and his criminal companions with him have continued to privateer, and act as pirates, after the proclamation of the King's edicts as before:

"Replied: that his ship had been led into this port by the captain of the aforesaid *Astrée*, on board which he himself had been placed as prisoner, on the twenty-first of this month.

"Questioned, etc.?

"Replied: that as soon as he hauled down his flag, he commanded all his crew not to rebel against the King, or against the King's orders, even though unjust. That as

to this, besides, the deposition of the *Astrée's* captain, appended to these proceedings, bears witness. That, in consequence, he, Thomas l'Agnelet, does not hold himself accountable for the several musket- and pistol-shots, doubtless ordered by some subordinate, bewildered, and not without reason, by the aforesaid flagrant injustice. That in any case, he, Thomas l'Agnelet, having in his lifetime taken captive by boarding them four or five hundred ships, declares and protests that the surrender of his own *Belle Hermine* to the *Astrée* was obtained without any resistance worth speaking of, seeing that, had there been any such resistance, the *Astrée* would, at this hour, be aground somewhere or run to the bottom, and the *Belle Hermine* riding free.

"Questioned as to who this subordinate officer might be who gave the order to fire, and thus become guilty of the death of thirteen good and true servants of the King, killed in the ensuing discharge?

"REFUSED TO ANSWER. Taken later to the torture chamber, PERSISTED IN HIS REFUSAL. And, straddling the seat, bound, and thrice pulled up by the rope, PERSISTED AS ABOVE.

"Questioned as to the woman, calling herself Juana, found aboard the *Belle Hermine* and taken captive, after the most obstinate and criminal resistance to the King's representatives, in which the three men first seeking to set hand on her were either killed or grievously wounded by pistol-shot or poignard?

"REFUSED TO ANSWER. And led to the torture chamber, and thrice pulled up by the rope, as above, PERSISTED IN HIS REFUSAL.

"Questioned as to whether this woman is really, as she claims and boasts, a member of the pirate crew of the *Belle Hermine*, and actually served under the accused in the capacity of first lieutenant or second officer?

"REFUSED TO ANSWER. And led to the torture chamber, and thrice, etc., PERSISTED AS ABOVE.

"Questioned, etc.?

"Replied: that he has, in the course of his life, captured so many ships that he is far from being able to remember them all. That, in capturing these prizes, and making them as numerous as possible, his conscience assured him he was loyally serving his King, and that no further proof of this need be offered than the honours and marks of favour bestowed upon him at St. Germain-en-Laye and elsewhere by the aforesaid King, whom he humbly claims as his Master and Lord. That said prizes were captured under valid letters of marque, given to the accused either in the name of the King of France, or in the name of other legitimate monarchs. That in effect said letters of marque are to-day expired, and that the accused can furnish no others. But that no blame should attach to him for this, inasmuch as he would not have failed to solicit new letters, had the present Governors not, in advance, warned him that they were issuing no more such, and that all Filibusters would henceforth have to do without the same.

"Questioned as to the most recent of these numerous captures—to wit, those made by the accused in the course of his last sorties?

"REFUSED TO ANSWER, saying that he did not remember. And led to the torture chamber, and there tortured, PERSISTED IN HIS REFUSAL.

"Questioned as to whether numerous Spanish, Dutch, Flemish, Danish, Portuguese ships, recently disappeared with all hands aboard, might not have been destroyed by the accused, said accused scuttling the ships, the crews being shot or drowned?

"REFUSED TO ANSWER SAID QUESTIONS,

saying that he cannot truthfully say whether yes or no, and that he has no wish to lie. And led to the torture, and pressed, PERSISTED AS ABOVE.

"Questioned as to that savage and heretical cruelty displayed on his return from his last cruise with forty of the enemy's corpses, or folk declared to be such, hanging from the masts and yard-arms like so much horrid fruit on the branches of orchard trees?

"REFUSED TO ANSWER. And led to the torture, and pressed, etc., PERSISTED AS ABOVE.

"Asked whether he knows that in privateering without letters of marque and in attacking, pillaging, and massacring in the midst of peace, he has acted as a villainous pirate and sea-robber?

"Replied (with indignation and high fury): that he is, as he has always been, a Corsair and a Gentleman of Fortune, but not a pirate, if by pirate is meant a brigand and a thief, whereas he, Thomas l'Agnelet, and all his companions, and notably the woman Juana, above-mentioned, never failed to act as decent people, God aiding."

And these are the questions and the replies made thereto by the said captain, or pirate chief, which being read to the same by the said secretary as duly sworn, the prisoner acknowledged them to contain but the truth, averring he had nothing whether to add to or take away therefrom.

Signed,

THOMAS L'AGNELET
GOET-QUINTIN DE LOSQUET
SAINT LAURENT
BEGON
HARVUT
J. KORCUF.

*Appended to the Above*

*The report of Louis Constant de Malestroit, ship's captain of the fourth class, commander of His Majesty's ship* Astrée, *to Monsieur le Marquis de Plessis-Corlay, Admiral, and Commander-in-chief.*

"ADMIRAL,

"Conforming to your orders, I have the honour to address to you the following report on the capture made by me, in the King's name, of the pirate vessel known as the *Belle Hermine*, a light frigate of twenty guns, commanded by the Sieur Thomas l'Agnelet, and sailing under a black flag, with white death's-heads, and a red pendant embroidered in gold.

"Having got under way with the express design of proceeding to this operation, as soon as your signalled order was received, I summoned my men at once to clear decks for action, hawling close meanwhile to gain the windward of the enemy. This I succeeded in doing before he perceived my intention. It appeared, at least, that he thereupon took some measures for engaging in defence, but every man for himself so to say, and with neither fife nor drum.

"On finding myself soon within pistol-shot I ran up my white flag,[1] then bore down, bringing up alongside, to board the frigate. As I did so I called out to the pirate to surrender, doubting that he would comply for the gunners had already taken out the tampions of the guns and loaded them, in experienced fashion. I was mistaken though, for at my command Captain Thomas l'Agnelet—whom I had at that moment perceived and recognized, standing on the poop-castle—with his own hand pulled at the gear of his red pendant and struck the same. Doubt-

[1] The custom at this time was to manœuvre in front of the enemy either without displaying any emblem, or under a false flag. A ship's real ensign was displayed only in the moment when the first shot was fired.

less, he deemed the game lost in advance, and with good reason; for such rascal crews, brave as Cæsar when it comes to attacking poor inoffensive merchantmen, are prone to turn tail on real fighting folk, and engage in combat with them regretfully and right slackly. For my part, in spite of this apparent surrender, I ordered the grappling irons made ready as an additional precaution, and summoned my boarding divisions, fearing some treachery. And well that I did so.

"For, when, the next instant, sword in hand, I was stepping on board the pirate, to take possession of it in accordance with your orders, fifty or twenty of the crew made a furious onslaught upon me. A rather hot contest ensued, in the course of which, I regret to inform you, our losses were considerable, amounting in fact to eleven killed and twenty-one wounded. Truth compels me to declare that these losses would have been even more considerable, not to say, fatal, if the above-mentioned Captain Thomas l'Agnelet had not deliberately come to our rescue, himself rushing into the midst of the rebels and enjoining them with threats to put down their arms and obey the King, which finally they did.

"The attack above related had been conducted with too much unanimity for it to be attributed to the blind rage of bandits caught in a trap and rebelling against their fate. The fifteen or twenty furious assailants who had thrown themselves upon me had done so at the instigation and command of some leader who did not at first appear. But after the last of these rebels had surrendered, the leader in question was revealed, issuing abruptly from the quarter-deck, and advancing straight upon us, a pistol in each hand. My surprise was such as you may imagine when I tell you that this leader was a young and beautiful lady, very richly dressed, and such that, in any other surroundings, I would have taken her to be a person of quality. Uncertain as to the sort of creature she might here prove to be, I took two steps toward her,

wishful to beg her to explain herself. But for this I had no time. Without more ado, this mysterious heroine interrupted my first speech with a pistol-shot, which pierced my flank, and then fired a second at one of my ensigns, Monsieur Doulevant, who was killed instantly. At once my men rushed upon this female demon, so dangerously skilful in manipulating her weapons; and they soon overcame her, though not before a sailor too had lost his life in the conflict, struck dead by a dagger snatched too late from this fatally dangerous hand.

"This affair ended, and the aforesaid damsel properly handcuffed—the Sieur Thomas l'Agnelet evincing toward her the tenderest solicitude, and urging that the cords roughly binding her be loosened, to which I did not consent, I was able, nevertheless—although suffering somewhat grievously of my wound—to give orders for working the ship and thus to come back to our anchorage, in company with my manned prize—not, however, without having first commanded the signal: 'The Admiral's orders have been carried out.'

"Upon which I have the honour to be, Monsieur le Marquis, your very humble, very obedient, and very faithful servant,

Signed,

LOUIS CONSTANT DE MALESTROIT.

"*Taken from the minutes of the clerk's records of the Admiralty Office, section specially assigned to the isle of the Tortoise.*

"From the portfolio wherein are recorded the sentences pronounced against the pirates found on the light frigate named *Belle Hermine*, taken and captured by the ships of the King, the said pirates having been accused and convicted of acting as pirates, and attacking by force of arms numerous merchant ships, and of forcibly seizing the crews of the same and putting them to death, con-

trary to all the laws of justice, and lamentably failing in the obedience due the edicts, crown, and dignity of the King our master:

"In consequence of which, as to Sieur Thomas Trublet, known as l'Agnelet, pirate and felon:

"In the name of His Very Christian Majesty, Louis, King of France and of Navarre, the sentence pronounced against said Thomas Trublet, called l'Agnelet, for his crimes, in consequence of which this Court now pronounces judgment upon him, as follows:

"That you, Thomas Trublet, called l'Agnelet, are to go from here to the place whence you came, and that, as soon as arrived thither, you are to be hanged by the neck until death ensues.

"May God in his infinite mercy take pity on your soul!"

"As to the woman Juana, pirate and murderess:

"In the name of his Very Christian Majesty, Louis, King of France and of Navarre, the sentence pronounced against said Juana for her crimes, and that this Court pronounces in consequence, as follows:

"That you, Juana, are to go from here to the place whence you came, and that, from there, you will be conducted to the place of execution, where you will be hanged by the neck until death ensues.

### *Marginal Note*

"The condemned woman, the above-mentioned Juana, having requested the aid of midwives, to the end that they bear witness to her state of pregnancy, and Dame Marie-Jeanne Becat, midwife, under oath, having verified and certified that the condemned woman is truly in a state of pregnancy of three months or thereabouts—the Court orders a reprieve in the execution of the sentence.

"Which execution is to take its course, according to the demands of justice, after the delivery, nursing, and weaning of the infant—unless His Majesty accords additional mercies."

(*The last six words—doubtless added after an interval to the record—are apparently inscribed in different ink, and by another hand. No woman thus reprieved until delivery was ever required by the King to fulfil her sentence.*)

## CHAPTER II

NCE outside the house of Sieur Trebabu, Thomas, though still shackled, and fairly blinded by his first glimpse of the sun, nevertheless advanced with a firm, and a proud step. And the chaplain, who was lending him an arm, as the usage is—Governor Cussi had sent his very own chaplain for the occasion—had no need to uphold or help forward a patient who proved as handsomely disdainful of death as he had been of life. The rabble, running up in great crowds, ready to make a tremendous uproar at the passage of the funeral cortege, calling out barbarous jests at the man for whom it had formerly felt a most respectful terror, the rabble, cowardly and vile as it always is, stood silent and abashed at sight of a distress so proud—nay, triumphant, in very truth!

Thus Thomas Trublet, Sieur de l'Agnelet, gentleman by the King's decree, making his way to the gallows. And those who looked on him at this supreme hour could not call to mind ever having seen him more calm or more resolute, even on those occasions when, after some successful enterprise, he disembarked and festively cast anchor at the door of the first tavern he encountered.

A hundred and twenty archers stood guarding the road down which the cortege passed. Forty more surrounded the condemned man. The King's Commissioners, who led the way, were escorted by twelve men-at-arms. Bearing pistol and cutlass, eight keepers from the gaol escorted

the executioner, who came last, and, by way of tail-piece, four *anspessades,* sabres up-raised, kept pace alongside the banner-bearer, who bore aloft the grim flag of the executioner. A veritable army in short! For greatly did the Counsellor Goet-Quintin—of both the civil and criminal courts—fear that by riot or conspiracy, planned by the friends of the condemned, the prisoner might be snatched from the agents of justice. Two hundred soldiers under arms—little enough, when Thomas l'Agnelet was the man to be guarded!

And after these, twenty monks, bare-footed, ropes round their necks, their faces overshadowed by the sombre hoods of the black penitents, came bearing torches, and chanting the prayers for the dying. And this too the Counsellor Goet-Quintin had ordered, to the end that the example of so solemn a hanging might duly fill the people with terror and awe, and instill into the very depths of all Filibuster hearts a just and salutary fear of the King and the King's justice. Only at this price would there ever be established in these western Indies that sovereign peace which His Majesty, with royal munificence, wished to bestow on the whole universe. . . .

As a victim then, one might say, expiating the sins of others beside his own, Thomas Trublet, Sieur de l'Agnelet, advanced toward the gallows-tree; and the chaplain, lending him an arm, endeavoured unctuously to support him, exhorting him to accomplish one of those Christian deaths by means of which, God aiding, the most guilty sinner, washed of his crimes, can elude even a brief sojourn in purgatory, and from the very steps of the gibbet, fly straight to Paradise.

Thomas, courteously contrite, though heeding the good father's words, was none the less casting around him the keen glances of one who is gazing on all things for the last time. Now, as the confessor, with the fulness of eloquence, was depicting to him the supreme joys that await

the elect on their arrival in Heaven, Thomas, ever peering to right and left, perceived that he was at that precise moment passing in front of the tavern of the Dancing Tortoise where in the past he had tasted other pleasures, not unworthy, for all they were of so earthly a character, of causing him some regret at leaving them. And it so happened that the tavern-keeper, a kindly fellow, perceiving his former patron and boon companion thus passing by in the sad accoutrements of the condemned, with right honest impulse caught up a great tankard of pure wine and was for carrying it to Thomas by way of comfort. But, through ill-natured whim, or undue severity mayhap, the archers would not consent thereto, and Thomas thus saw himself defrauded of the liquor poured out for his benefit. And at this he betrayed some annoyance, for he was thirsty.

"My son!" then spoke the chaplain softly, "my son, make an offering of this deprivation to God, for He will be mindful of it!"

He pressed Thomas's arm as he spoke, and Thomas, yielding to this almost affectionate pressure, made some effort to master his irritation.

"So be it, if such is your wish, Father!" said he after a little. And, almost aloud, he reflected, "After all, I can hold my thirst a while longer, for the wine they drink in Paradise cannot fail to be better than the wine they dispense at the Dancing Tortoise!"

The confessor, intent on his edifying discourse, was not listening, however, but continued in this wise:

"My son," said he, "you have forgiven the archer who deprived you of the wherewithal to quench your thirst. And praise be to God by whose grace your heart was so prompted! And now tell me, do you likewise forgive all your enemies, making no exception therefrom, for every wrong done you?"

"*Oui-da!*" uttered Thomas with all sincerity. And again he reflected: "A bargain too for me if my enemies

forgive me in the same fashion! For the wrongs they have done me are but as motes, whereas the wrongs I have done them are beams of the thickest sort! . . ."

Sadly, he smiled as in his mind's eye he saw again sister Guillemette, and his sweetheart Anne-Marie of long ago, and the burghers of St. Malo, and the Spaniards of Ciudad Real, and those of Vera Cruz, and the unnumbered crews encountered on the seas—and Juana. . . .

Thus dreaming and meditating, Thomas continued on his way with a calm step, paying no heed to the path being followed. And a miracle it was in sooth to see this man—once so proud and self-willed—to such a degree quieted by the approach of death, as though already he had entered within the majestic serenity of the grave.

Nevertheless, in spite of the indifference he displayed henceforth toward all earthly things, Thomas betokened some astonishment when his escort, leaving the streets of the city proper, proceeded past the wharves and storehouses of the port, and engaged in the path bordering the shore. Ordinarily, the gibbet was erected far from there, on the top of a little hillock which dominated all the surrounding region. Surprised, Thomas turned to the chaplain.

"Where the deuce am I to be branched, father?" he asked.

But the confessor was again gently pressing his arm.

"What is that to you, my son? Keep your thoughts on God alone now, whom shortly you are to see in all His glory. . . . And look not yonder!" he added hastily, in the very moment when Thomas was turning his eyes seaward, to see what ships there rode at anchor.

The good father wished thus to keep him from sight of the gibbet. But Thomas, perceiving that the head of the cortege was in straight line with his own *Belle Hermine*, anchored by four cables close against the shore, already understood.

"*Hola!*" cried he, in spite of himself, speaking louder than he would have wished, "and is it from my own yard-arm that I am shortly to dance the Huguenots' jig, just as our Spaniards did a week agone?"

"Yes, that it is, my master," replied the hangman, for the first time joining in, for he thought that his patient had asked a question of him, and being by nature courteous, could see no impropriety in replying.

Thomas, moreover, thanked him with a friendly nod.

"*Pardieu!*" said he, gazing without so much as blenching by a hair at the yard-arm from which one of the hangman's assistants had already suspended hoisting gear, "that's well to my taste! In this wise I shall start on my last voyage as a good voyager should—from my own home!"

And still, in spite of the chaplain's efforts to distract him, he continued gazing at the yard-arm.

"*Pardieu!*" then he laughed with superb scorn, "never in my life have I been to so fine a fête, in so fair a setting, or had so high a place reserved for me from which to view it . . ."

But, as the last word left his lips, he shuddered of a sudden, and his eyes widened. In the dim background of his memories he had just caught a glimpse of the old witch of St. Malo, one of whose frightful predictions had already come to pass. And it seemed to him that again he heard the quavering old voice running toward him, skippety-hop, over time and space, to say to him again, to him, Thomas, on the point of being hanged, the strange words so incomprehensible of yore, and now so weighted with a terrible significance:

"You will come to a high end, very high . . . higher than a throne. . . ."

From that moment to the last he walked on profoundly pensive, his eyes on the ground. And several times, with deep and bitter grief, he murmured the name of Louis Guénolé.

A plank laid from shore to rail gave access to the captive frigate. Thomas walked up the incline with a rapid step though his legs were somewhat closely shackled. And, at finding himself once more in the middle of the deck which had so often proved a glorious battlefield, and which so many times had borne him victorious over the seas, he breathed more freely.

At last the ceremonies attendant on such an event were performed. The vice-counsellor's representative read the sentence. The condemned man was thereupon handed over to the hangman, who took possession of him.

Thomas, supremely indifferent, allowed himself to be led, as his captors would. But in the very moment preceding the execution, there arrived upon the scene one before whom everyone respectfully made way. Thomas, raising his eyes, recognized Monsieur de Cussi Tarin, whom a generous compassion had constrained to come lend what aid he could to his host of earlier time, a host ever admired by him, as the reader knows, for his rare valour—so rare in sooth that Cussi Tarin, valiant soldier that he was himself, and a good judge in matters of bravery, esteemed it more than human.

The hangman's assistants drew back. Thomas, civilly, saluted. Pale with the stress of his feelings, Monsieur de Cussi Tarin grasped the prisoner's manacled hands, pressing them closely in his own.

"*Las!*" said he, scarcely able to speak—"and why could you not have believed me when I told you . . ."

He was constrained to break off. But Thomas, a hundredfold less moved than was the worthy Governor, finished in his stead:

"When you told me that I was risking my head? So be it! But I beg you, waste no grief on the matter. Apparently, I was not born to die by drowning! But I am every whit as grateful to you, monsieur, never doubt it!"

The chaplain approached thereupon, holding out to Thomas a copper crucifix.

"Kiss Him, my son, and trust in His mercy. He will forgive you, if you forgive others."

"With all my heart!" declared Thomas, looking at the Governor. "I forgive even the King, though he has grievously deceived me!"

The hangman who was beginning to find the delay irksome, hereupon gave a cough.

"Adieu, messieurs," said Thomas, taking the hint.

But Monsieur de Cussi had again grasped him by both hands.

"God save me!" said he, weeping without further effort at restraint, "but I am at this moment more beset by grief than you by regret or fear! . . . Captain l'Agnelet, tell me, have you any request to make . . . any request at all . . . before you die? . . . *Foi de Cussi*, but I would give my right arm to content you!"

Thomas looked him squarely in the eye, then, slowly, gave a shrug.

"*Oui-da!*" he murmured. "But what I would most desire . . ."

Again he shrugged, more dubious than before.

"What is it, then?"—asked the Governor, surprised.

"If I might but see her!"

He spoke so low that Monsieur de Cussi doubted his own ears.

"What then is it?" he asked once more.

"To see her!" repeated Thomas, still very low, and almost humbly. "To see her, Juana, my love . . . the mother of my little one. . . ."

He had been told that she was with child.

"By my soul!"—vehemently exclaimed the good Governor, "is that all? See her you shall, I shall attend to that! Her prison is but three hundred yards or so from here. . . ."

He made haste to give his orders, and one of the

*anspessades*, taking two archers with him, ran straightway to the prison in question.

The hangman, meanwhile, was growling at the lengthening delay. And Thomas, hearing him growl, wished to restore him to good humour, for his own heart was veritably inundated with joy at the thought of seeing, and within a few minutes, her from whom he had thought to be separated until Judgment Day. Turning then to the hangman, Thomas, without further dallying, put himself into the fellow's charge, and commanded him to proceed to the preliminary ceremonies, just as though the supreme hour had struck.

"In this wise," said he, laughing as though at a jest of exquisite relish, "you can dispatch me as speedily as ever hangman sped his guest, so soon as I have five or six times kissed *la belle jolie* I await. And never fear, I'll not take too long about it, for when her tears begin to run I shall not want to look on her more. . . ."

And so, at his bidding, the fatal noose was passed over his head, and the gibbet ladder laid hard against the netting. Whereupon, he stood close by, waiting.

But soon he gave a start, and, in spite of his prodigious courage, turned the very hue of death: the *anspessade* was returning, and the two archers with him, but there was no Juana.

"What does this mean?" cried Thomas l'Agnelet, unable to refrain from taking as wide a step forward as the shackles on his legs permitted.

The *anspessade* removed his hat, for the face of the condemned man showed at that moment a terrible majesty.

"The lady"—he stammered, "the lady would not come. She said . . ."

He stopped, to catch his breath. Thomas, his voice as ghastly as his face, repeated:

"She said?"

"She said: 'Tell him that what befalls him is nothing

to me. For, if he had fought awhile since like a man, he would not now have to die like a cur.' "

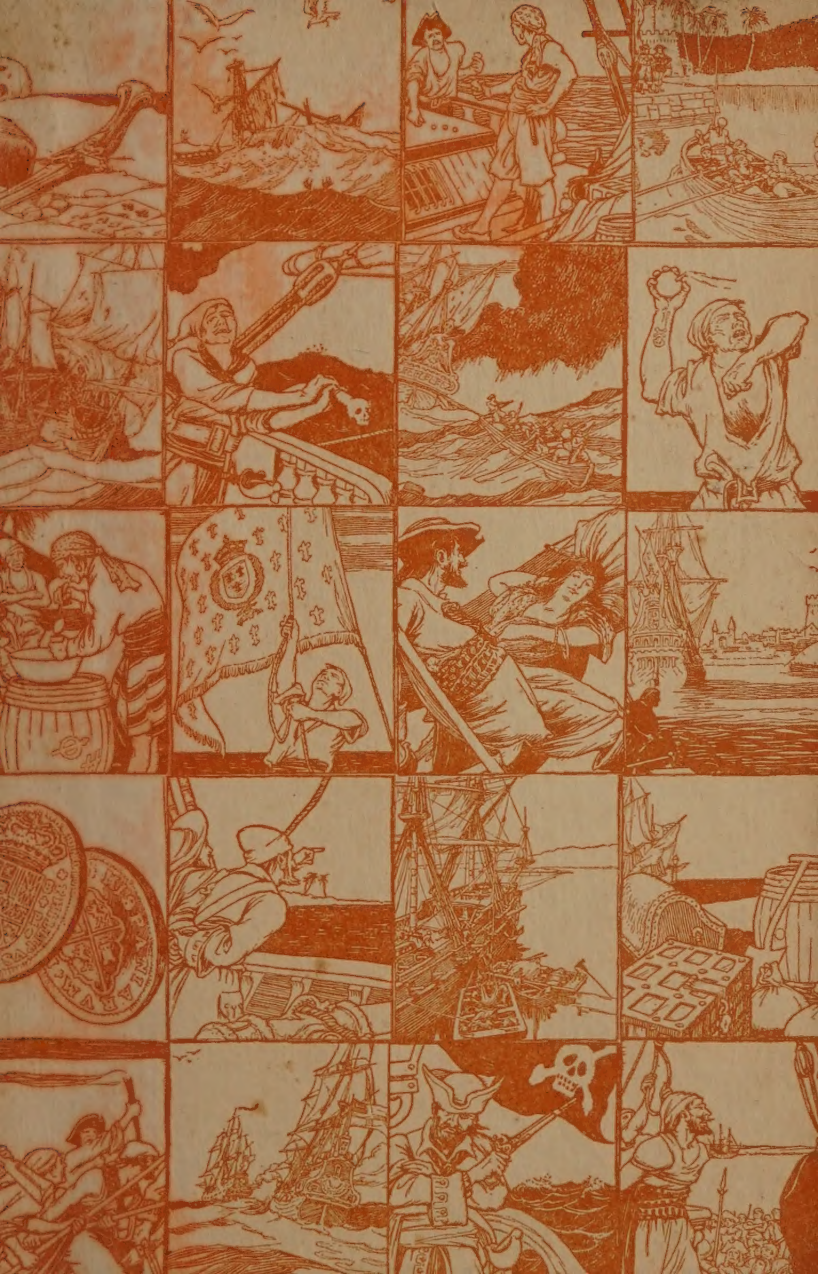
Thomas, three times, swallowed. And he was able still to speak.

"Didn't she"—he gasped "didn't she say anything more?"

"Yes," said the *anspessade*, turning his three-cornered hat round and round. "Yes! . . . she said . . ."

"She said?"

"She said the child was none of yours. . . ."

Without a sound, Thomas l'Agnelet had suddenly toppled, sinking down, his body bending at a right angle the way a man does at times on receiving a mortal thrust. But, the next moment, straightening up with a jerk, as his shoulders struck against the gibbet ladder, he turned around, climbed three steps, and jumped off. The rope of the block and tackle, hard set for the purpose, and the run thereof stopped, broke his neck on the instant.

THE END